

## **Brimfield Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Date:** November 14, 2023

**Location:** Hitchcock Academy

**Committee Members Present:** Joe Ballou: Chair, Mike Moloney, Denise DuPont, Nancy Waugh, Ted Steensen

**Committee Members Absent:** Patrick Kubala, Billie Jean Rubio

**Town Staff Present:** Madeline Goodrich (Treasurer), Marie Arsenault (Accountant), Patricia Plasse (Finance Committee Clerk)

**Called to order:** 6:35: p.m.

### **Longevity Awards**

Joe Ballou asked Marie Arseneault (Town Accountant) to speak about the Longevity Awards. She stated that there were five employees that were eligible for the awards but were omitted in the budget. Marie requested that the five employees be included in the Longevity Awards.

**MOTION:** Ted Steensen made a motion to approve the five employees to be included in the Longevity Awards.

**SECOND:** Denise Dupont

**VOTE:** All

Denise Dupont asked who will be responsible for the Longevity Awards going forward. Marie Arsenault said it will be the Treasurer. Denise asked if there is a back-up to track the Longevity Awards. Madeline Goodrich (Town Treasurer) stated that the Tracker they have is working fine.

### **Reserve Fund Transfer Requests**

Joe Ballou asked Madeline Goodrich (Town Treasurer) to speak to the Reserve Fund Transfer she requested. She explained that most of the reconciliation was not done for the last fiscal year. The requirements for an audit going back in time takes more hours than are allowed within the budget. Madeline stated she did not know why the audit was behind and stated the interim vacancy of the Treasurer's Office could have contributed to it.

Joe Ballou asked Madeline Goodrich to introduce herself since she is new to the position. She explained her background and said she is a Massachusetts Certified Treasurer and is fully certified to carry the title. Ted Steensen asked Madeline if there is a different test for the Collector and asked if Madeline had her Collector's Certification. Madeline informed the Committee she did not have the Collector Certification and explained there are different tests for both the Treasurer and the Collector. She said certain criteria must be met before the test can be taken. She went on to say that it includes years of experience and education and can take up to five years to become certified.

Ted asked Madeline if the consultant would be hired with an hourly rate. Madeline stated the Consultant she wanted to hire charged an hourly rate. The request Madeline asked for was \$5,000 (five-thousand dollars) but she said she did not think it would cost the entire amount at \$55.00 (fifty-five dollars) an hour. Joe Ballou asked if Madeline will eventually be certified as a Treasurer-Collector. Madeline said she has completed some of the classes required for certification and plans to continue that education.

Mike Moloney asked Madeline what type of consultant would be hired. She said that she had a dependable consultant she would like to hire. She explained that she needs help to bring some of the outstanding accounts to be current. Joe Ballou asked Marie Arsenault (Town Accountant) if there was a process required to hire a consultant. She stated there was not and she added that she knew of the consultant Madeline had in mind to hire and she was very good.

**MOTION:** Ted Steensen made a motion to approve hiring the Consultant to assist with the audit.

**SECOND:** Denise Dupont

**VOTE:** All

#### **Code Red-Selectboard**

Joe Ballou explained that the cost for the Code-Red System was more than what was added to the budget since the Select Board did not have the actual cost last year. Marie Arsenault indicated that the bill had already been paid. Joe said that the budget for that is \$927.11 short.

**MOTION:** Ted Steensen made a motion to approve transfer to cover the short fall.

**SECOND:** Denise Dupont

**VOTE:** All

#### **Planning Board Expense Transfer**

Joe Ballou explained the reason for a transfer to the Planning Board Expense Budget in the amount of \$496.00. There was a need to publish an advertisement in the Sturbridge News as required by the Attorney General for the FEMA Flood Map updates.

**MOTION:** Ted Steensen to approved transfer of funds to the Planning Board Expense Account.

**SECOND:** Denise Dupont

**VOTE:** All

#### **Target Wage/Salary Increase for FY 2025**

Joe Ballou spoke about the target increases might be for FY2025. He said he reviewed the Consumer Price Index that was released for October and that Marie Arsenault sent other documents to the Committee to review. He explained that the Benchmarking Project should be out soon, and asked if the Committee thought they should get started on what the increase should be or wait for them to receive the results. They had a discussion surrounding CPI, the Consumer Index and the volatility of the fuel and food prices. It was decided that the increase would be put in as a placeholder at 4%.

**MOTION:** Ted Steensen made a motion to start the increase at 4% for this year.

**SECOND:** Denise Dupont

**VOTE:** All

There was discussion surrounding the tax rate. Marie Arsenault said the tax rate was \$14.62.

Joe Ballou said that there was a reserve fund request form the Fire Chief, but he asked to table it for now and it will come back with it sometime in January.

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

The next meeting is January 30, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Patricia A. Plasse, Clerk