

Buckland Finance Committee Minutes
February 17, 2020

Meeting called to order at the Buckland Town Hall, Buckland MA, 7 p.m.

Committee members present: Karen Blom, Ciara Hayden, Larry Langford, Raymond Lanza-Weil, Paula Consolo

Others: Town Administrator Heather Butler, Selectboard members Barry DeCastillo and Dena Wilmore, citizen Marilyn Kelsey. Board of Assessors members Marion Scott and Elizabeth Cerone

Assessors Discussion

Salary of one of our assessors is lower than other town employees with the same level of job (a sergeant, town clerk, and treasurer collector). Also, compared to other local assessors, her salary is lower. Heather says she would hate to lose this employee, who is very valuable to the town. A raise for this employee would mean a \$3,700 annual increase for the town. The board of assessor's voted to give her the raise and the selectboard supported this unanimously. Finance Committee agrees with this decision and will work the raise into this year's budget.

Assessors leave at 7:17 pm

Karen moves to approve the minutes from February 1. Larry second. Unanimously approved.

Karen moves to approve the minutes from February 3. Raymond second. Unanimously approved.

School Committee representative Martha Thurber arrived at 7:17 pm

School Committee representative David Parrella arrived at 7:25 pm

Discussion of School Budget

Martha had shared a preliminary budget with the Finance Committee and Selectboard. This budget reflects a 3.62% increase in the operating budget and a 7.4% increase in total town assessments. Martha pointed out that the School Committee has not voted on the budget she sent to us. A public meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 19, will help inform the School Committee on what the towns are able to afford and what school cuts the public is willing to tolerate.

According to Martha the Top 3 items driving this budget are: benefits, out of school tuition, and buildings and operations. Discussion on what could be cut from the school budget, how this budget affects the town budget. Martha explained that one version of the budget included cutting the woodshop program from the high school and turning the elementary school band

program into an after-school program. She said that the woodshop cut would result in a \$65,000 savings and affect just 9 students.

Martha and David leave at 8:14 pm

Discussion on our town budget.

Marilyn comments on retaining students, and points out that the 2007 override was voted down.

Next meeting is Monday, March 2, at Buckland Public Library.

Paula would like to have some information on the senior population of our town. We might consider exploring the possibility of giving seniors tax abatements. Ask Lisa how many seniors are behind in paying their taxes.

Meeting adjourned 9:01 pm

Respectfully submitted by Paula Consolo

