

*Westwood Finance and Warrant Commission*  
*January 8, 2013*  
*Meeting Minutes*

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Chairman Masi-Phelps called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M.

All Finance and Warrant Commission (Fincom) members present.

Chairman Masi-Phelps asked if anyone wished to record the meeting and granted permission to WestCat to record the meeting.

Chairman Masi-Phelps:

- At their January 7 meeting, the Board of Selectmen:
  - Closed the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) scheduled for May 6.
  - Opened and closed the warrant for the Special Town Meeting (STM) which had tentatively been scheduled for February 28 but will now be held on May 6. Considering the number of issues to be addressed in both the ATM and STM warrants, it would appear that more than one night will be needed to complete business.
- At this time the Fincom meeting schedule prepared last fall will accommodate both the ATM and STM processes. We will add additional meetings should the need arise.
- Tonight's agenda includes:
  - A financial presentation from Finance Director Pam Dukeman who last updated the Fincom at the November 13 Fincom meeting. Tonight is not a detailed budget presentation; rather, it will update on what has changed since November and what can be expected going forward.
  - A housing presentation from the University Station (US) developers. The housing presentation will be similar to that given at a recent Planning Board meeting. This is not a public hearing about University Station and is very early in the Fincom process of reviewing warrant articles.

*Financial Update – Finance Director Pam Dukeman*

Members received a presentation handout to which Pam provided comments.

Some major comments:

- FY13 state aid – recent news indicated there could be a mid-year cut to state aid – for Westwood, this would be approximately \$6,170.
- Town sold a \$4.635M bond in December, 2012 which consisted of prior bond authorization projects.
- Projected revenue remains on track; Governor's FY14 budget released 1-25-13.
- FY14 operating budgets – Selectmen continue to review municipal budget; Superintendent to present recommended school budget 1-17-13.
  - The FY14 Fire Department budget presently includes the Chief's request for additional overtime. In the recent past, this overtime has been covered via a supplemental transfer in Article 1 at Town Meeting.
- FY14 capital – initial meetings have occurred and will continue to prioritize items. Long Range Committee to discuss items at 1-9-13 meeting.
- Stabilization and OPEB preliminary plan appropriations on track.

Fincom members continued the lengthy public safety (Fire Department) study discussion that began at their October meeting and continued at the November meeting. In particular, is the study ongoing and when can the results be expected. A major Fincom concern was and continues to be whether the outcome

of the study will be known in time for the Fincom to deliberate and consider as part of their FY14 budget recommendation to the Town.

Some member comments:

- Although some thought the Town has taken steps to move the study forward (sharing the RFP with the Fincom Municipal Subcommittee), a significant number of members felt they have not been informed as they should on the particulars of the study...primarily its completion date. Additionally, the Board of Selectmen voted to ask the Town Administrator to conduct the study and report back to them; something that still has not been done.
- If the study recommended additional Fire Department staffing:
  - The 3% FY14 overall operating budget target could not be met. Either reductions in other areas or an override would be required.
  - The additional staffing could not be incorporated into the FY14 budget because of the length of time it takes to hire firefighters due to training, etc.
  - The Selectmen would have some options to consider going forward.
- Chairman Masi-Phelps:
  - On March 25 or 26 (final Fincom public hearing), the Fincom will have to either approve the Selectmen's recommended budget or recommend something different. The Chairman would not recommend the latter; however, the Fincom needs to make a well-informed decision and subsequent recommendation on the budget.
  - At last year's Town Meeting, the Fire Chief indicated the Town is safe.
- Suggestion that the municipal and school OPEB liability be clearly identified in each of those budgets, rather than in the fixed costs budget. The thought is that when the Fincom and residents make decisions about the municipal and school department (particular regarding additional staffing) budgets they should be clear on the current OPEB obligation and its future impact.

### *University Station Housing Presentation*

University Station Project Manager Chris McKeown introduced various representatives of the University Station development team. Tonight's housing presentation was described by the Hanover Company representative, which was similar to that presented recently to the Planning Board. Fincom members were invited for a tour of the Hanover Company apartments in Needham whenever they wish.

A few members of the public asked housing questions and/or commented on the housing component of the project related to:

- The number of school aged children the housing may include.
- The level of affordable units and how that affects the Town's overall obligation.
- The additional traffic.

### *Subcommittee Reports*

- **University Station Subcommittee** – Chairman George Hertz reported:
  - Subcommittee members have attended many Planning Board meetings.
  - It appears resident concerns focus primarily on increased school enrollment and traffic issues.
  - The Subcommittee wants to look at the finances; what is the true financial benefit to the Town...which they expect to be outlined in the Town's financial consultant report.
  - The Subcommittee's desire to see the development agreement well before it is finalized, particularly what controls are in place relative to future development.
  - George stated he has seen the Needham housing complex that the Hanover Company built and thinks it is beautiful and the company itself is excellent.
- **Municipal Subcommittee** – Members continued the earlier conversation regarding the public safety study. Chairman Masi-Phelps stated it is up to the Selectmen to act on the study recommendations.

- Subcommittee Chair Rob Uek raised the issue (also discussed at previous meetings) of access to department heads to discuss their budgets. Town Administrator Mike Jaillet wants to be party to any meetings held between Fincom and department heads.
  - Why is this change occurring now?
  - Some members felt that since only the School Superintendent (and member of the School Committee) meets with Fincom and not school principals, the same should apply on the municipal side.
  - Some felt department heads would have “wish lists” when talking with Fincom members; that Mike would view the need to balance all needs within limited resources.
  - A member thought the request for Mike’s presence was a control issue and not allowing Fincom to do its job. Chairman Masi-Phelps does not think the Fincom’s independence is affected.
  - Chairman Masi-Phelps urged the Subcommittee to communicate with Mike Jaillet and to try to work toward a productive outcome to the situation.
- **Education Subcommittee** – Chairman Russ Lavoie stated the Superintendent will present his recommended budget to the School Committee on January 17. Discussions will then take place regarding the budget as well as possible school issues related to the University Station project.
- **Town’s OPEB Task Force** – Fincom members Peter Neville and Russ Lavoie serve on this Task Force. Peter reported the Task Force met on December 10 and will meet again in February. The State has issued their report, although it has not yet been posted on the web site. The suggested changes in retirees’ health insurance are expected to involve age to qualify, service years, and amount of benefit. The greatest savings would be with changes in the number of years of service to qualify for health insurance. Peter feels the recommended changes will help but do not rectify the problem. The progress is good; the Town will have to see what else it can do to address the problem.

***Approval of November 13, 2012 Meeting Minutes***

Mr. Neville moved approval of the November 13, 2012 meeting minutes; seconded by Ms. Murphy. Members in attendance at that meeting approved.

Chairman Masi-Phelps reminded members to acknowledge receipt of the State Ethics Commission material and to complete the on-line training by April.

**Meeting Adjourned at 10:15 P.M.**

**Next Meetings  
January 22, 23, 2013  
7:30 P.M., High School Professional Development Room**