**Finance Committee Minutes for March 5, 2020**

Meeting called to order at 7:10 p.m. Present were Deb Andrew, Daniel Lieberman, Kristian Whitsett, John Redeker, and Jackie Walsh

**Visit from Highway Superintendent Mark Shippee**

The department needs a new truck, and it can now get a two-year-old truck from Vermont. It'll cost $150,000 instead of $230,000. Another highway department traded it in to the dealer. Mark went and checked in out at the dealership near Mount Snow.

Mark said he isn't pushing for the department to buy used. "But this is a special deal," he said.

There is a problem in the department because the worker best at repairing trucks has left. Mark is trying to use a travelling mechanic who lives across the line in Colrain, who has come right away when asked to help.

Other items included in the department's capital requests include:

$60,000 for a pickup (not a high priority)

$30,000 for a message board to help alert drivers that a road is closed, etc. The police could use it, too, for construction sites

$60,000 for a brush chipper (ours is ancient)

There is also $32,540 that needs to be spent on the backhoe bought last year through a loan.

Some of this is Chapter 90 eligible but too many years that money has been used for trucks instead of road repairs, he said. It's very important to repair a 3/4-mile stretch of Frank Williams Road, which will cost between $150,000 and $160,000, he said.

The whole town has $443,000 for capital spending. We usually keep $200,000 to $300,000 in that account.

There are $522,000 in requests from town departments for that money.

Mark also would like more money for highway employees. They are scheduled for a 2.5 percent increase, and he would like that raised to 5 percent. That would cost the town $4,284 more.

It will be hard to attract people to fill the department's openings otherwise, he said.

**Visit from Town Clerk Joe Judd**

Joe requested $5,000 to scan historical records. Usually, he requests $2,000 a year. But there is catching up to do.

He had requested $6,952 for ground-penetrating radar at Hill Cemetery, but he said it could be postponed a year.

Joe also asked for a 5 percent salary increase, bringing Joe's salary from $22,173 to $23,403.

**Discussion of Senior Center requests**

Senior Center representatives had presented their budget and capital requests at an earlier meeting. They are asking for $15,000 toward planning for an expanded or new senior center. They requested that salaries as a line item go up by more than 2.5 percent because they'd like to add two hours to two positions.

Finance Committtee members wondered if the proposed senior center director salary could be dropped by 2.5 percent rather than increased 2.5 percent as it's likely the new director will have less experience than the outgoing Cathy Buntin.

**School budget**

At this point, the School Committee was proposing an increase in spending of 3.29 percent. Importantly, because of other resources that are expected to decrease, the proposed expectation is that the towns will spend 6.24 percent more as a group. Each town's portion is determined by whether the number of students is staying the same or not.

**Future meetings planned**

March 16, meet with police chief and highway chief

April 13, finalize warrant

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.