



Town of Griswold

Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
September 18, 2012
7:00 PM

Town Hall Meeting Room
APPROVED MINUTES



1. Roll Call/Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM

Board of Finance Members Present:

Steve Merchant, Sr. – Chairman
Peter Dorff – Vice Chairman
Brian Baker
Scott Davis
Gail Rooke-Norman
Daniel Webster
John Wolkowski

Also Present:

Erik Christensen, Director of Finance
J.R. Normand Sylvestre, Chairman, Griswold Ethics Commission
Elizabeth Dorff, Chairman, Board of Education
5 other persons

2. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: P. Dorff made a motion that was seconded by J. Wolkowski to approve the regular meeting minutes from August 21, 2012 with the condition that Brian Baker's wife be listed as Assistant Vice President and not Receptionist/Secretary under section 4b. **Motion passed** with P. Dorff, S. Davis, J. Wolkowski and S. Merchant Sr. in favor and B. Baker, G. Rooke-Norman and D. Webster abstaining.

3. New Business

a) Finance Director monthly report.

A copy of said report is available in the Finance Office. The Finance Director indicated that the 11/12 fiscal year has been closed out and the auditors were at the Town Hall last week. The Finance Director explained that expenditures exceeded revenues by \$478,549 for the fiscal year which was \$126,451 less than the budgeted amount of \$605,000. He stated that most yearend transfers were able to be done within each department but the Town did use \$22,749 out of the contingency/exchange account which was less than the \$45,000 budgeted. For 12/13 there is nothing out of the ordinary so far and no line items have been overspent. The undesignated fund balance is going to be around \$2,139,201 which is about 6.98% of the 11/12 budget. That leaves the Town \$467,515 short of the 8.5% that the Town would like to be at. There was discussion regarding investing of money, the Finance Director stated he has moved some to STIFF and is looking to transfer more to Wells Fargo once the Treasurer comes back to work. S. Merchant Sr. asked whether the Middle School audit has been finalized and the Finance Director stated that we are still waiting on the State to finalize it and they have everything they need. D. Webster stated that during budget season the Tax Collector mentioned accepting credit cards for payments. The Finance Director

stated that he was aware of the Tax Collector looking into the possibility but at this time we are still not accepting credit cards.

b) Discussion and possible action on year end 11-12 budget transfers.

The Finance Director went over the transfers and noted the departments that required transfers from the exchange/contingency account and the reasons the departments were over budget. **MOTION:** G. Rooke-Norman made a **motion** that was seconded by P. Dorff to accept the budget transfers as presented by the Finance Director. There was no discussion. All in favor; **motion carried.**

4. Old Business

a) Discussion of Town ethics policy

S. Merchant Sr. stated that Norm Sylvestre, Chairman of the Ethics Commission was in attendance. S. Merchant Sr. stated that he honestly did not think anyone in Town gets on any board or commission to fatten their pocket. S. Merchant Sr. discussed the article that was in the newspaper that stated there was a meeting and an investigation but S. Merchant Sr. said that the meeting never happened. S. Merchant Sr. asked N. Sylvestre to confirm and N. Sylvestre stated that was correct there was no meeting, he stated someone had a concern but there was not a complaint to the commission itself. S. Merchant Sr. discussed material he has read and stated that the trust of the taxpayer is what is important. N. Sylvestre stated he had handouts for the Board regarding recusals and did research on policies. S. Merchant Sr. stated that everything seems to be open to interpretation. D. Webster inquired about the meeting that N. Sylvestre stated did not take place. D. Webster wanted to know why if there was no meeting the Norwich Bulletin reported on it and he had a copy of the minutes from the July 12, 2012 Ethics Commission meeting. N. Sylvestre stated this was not so. G. Rooke-Norman went on record to state that she would like to get a copy of the audio from that meeting. N. Sylvestre stated he received an e-mail from D. Webster and he told the commission that he received the e-mail but he does not see a problem. It was not a complaint; he just wanted them to be aware because it was in the Bulletin. D. Webster read the e-mail dated April 24, 2012 asking N. Sylvestre his opinion on the proper procedure for recusal because he believed he was not being treated in the same fashion as others when it comes to recusals. Discussion followed regarding recusals. G. Rooke-Norman stated she commented to the Chair that D. Webster should not only recuse himself but should also leave the table during that particular Finance Board vote. That was because that particular Finance Board vote was not an ordinary Finance Board vote; it was a vote directly on and solely on whether or not to increase d. Webster's wife's hours as an employee of the Town of Griswold, no one else. To her recollection, there has never been a solitary vote on just one Finance Board member's wife's hours and therefore her request to the Chairman was a unique request in regard to a unique vote. She was not picking and choosing when she was going to enforce the rules as stated by D. Webster and newspaper reporter she was concerned that D. Webster remaining at the table during a vote to increase his own wife's hours was a clear conflict of interest and would place the integrity of the vote in jeopardy. It is widely accepted that when a Board member recuses themselves from a vote they should also leave the table because by remaining at the table they may affect the vote because of their proximity to their tablemates, the other voters on this issue by body language, etc. or even by the suggestion of impacting the vote. S. Merchant Sr. stated that he accepts responsibility for inconsistency with the recusal procedure in the past and from this point on if anyone recues themselves they are to leave the table and not be involved in the discussion. G. Rooke Norman asked if the Ethics Committee has had training. N.

Sylvestre stated that they have had outside training but nothing has come up since then to provide that. G. Rooke-Norman stated that the minutes from the Ethics Commission meeting called D. Webster's question an advisory opinion. N. Sylvestre said it was not an advisory opinion; the newspaper called it an advisory opinion. B. Baker stated he does not know how this matter is ever going to get resolved without going line item by line item because there are too many possible conflicts of interest. There was discussion on all of the possible conflicts with voting. G. Rooke-Norman stated that she disagrees that S. Davis can't vote on the Board of Education budget because the Griswold code of ethics section 35-10(c) it states that notwithstanding the provisions of subsection b which talked about relationships, a Town official or employee shall not be deemed to have an "interest" which is in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of his or her duties in the public interest or of his or her responsibilities as prescribed by the laws of this State if any benefit or detriment accrues to him or her, his or her spouse, a dependent child or a business with which he or she, his or her spouse or such dependent child is associated as a member of a profession, occupation or group to no greater extent than which would accrue to any other member of such profession, occupation or group. G. Rooke-Norman stated that when S. Davis votes on the bottom line number of the Board of Education budget, his wife is part of a group and his vote impacts her the same as it impacts the entire group no more no less. S. Merchant states he does not believe S. Davis or D. Webster are in conflict but it is open to interpretation. S. Merchant stated if there was a layoff list and S. Davis's wife was on that list he thinks there would be a conflict. S. Davis stated in that case it would be up to him to recuse himself. S. Merchant stated that he totally agreed. E. Dorff stated that the person subject to layoff would be notified ahead of time. G. Rooke-Norman stated that unless S. Davis knew his wife was on the layoff list he would have a conflict but absent that he is only voting on the bottom line and has no control over where they allocate their money it is not the same situation as the General Government budget. S. Merchant stated he believes D. Webster should not vote on any item in the building department. Discussion regarding recusals and leaving the table followed. S. Merchant stated that if you have a conflict you will leave the table and will not be able to comment. Discussion followed regarding how the budget is deliberated. D. Webster stated he would like to know if he was in conflict if he discusses or votes on the Building Inspector salary line item. S. Merchant Sr. asked the Finance Director to send a letter to the Ethics Commission for clarification.

b) Discussion and possible action regarding MLR rebate from insurance company

The Finance Director stated that he talked to the insurance brokers regarding the options to payout the rebate. He explained that there is still too much gray area regarding applying it to next year's premiums and the safest way to pay it out is by check. J. Wolkowski asked how much the rebate is. The Finance Director replied that the total rebate is around \$3,200 of which \$365 is to be returned to employees, approximately \$2,300 is going back to the Town, \$396 is for Griswold Ambulance and \$198 is for the Borough. **MOTION:** P. Dorff made a **motion** that was seconded by B. Baker to authorize the Finance Director to return the MLR rebate money to the appropriate entities by check or payroll distribution. There was no discussion. All in favor; **motion carried.**

5. Any Other Business

No other business.

6. **Adjournment: MOTION:** D. Webster made a **motion** that was seconded by B. Baker to adjourn. There was no discussion. All in favor; **motion carried.** S. Merchant, Sr. adjourned the meeting at 8:11 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Acting Recording Secretary
Erik Christensen