



Town of Griswold

Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
November 20, 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
Scott Davis
Gail Rooke-Norman
Daniel Webster
John Wolkowski

Absent:

Brian Baker

Also Present:

Erik Christensen, Director of Finance
1 other person

2. **Approval of Minutes**

MOTION: P. Dorff made a motion that was seconded by J. Wolkowski to approve the September 18, 2012 regular meeting minutes as corrected and the October 16, 2012 regular meeting minutes as presented. All in favor; **motion carried.**

3. **New Business**

a) **Finance Director monthly report.**

A copy of said report is available in the Finance Office. The Finance Director discussed current year revenues and expenditures. Current year revenue collected is \$12,665,150. Other than the projected tuition shortage discussed at the last Board of Finance meeting as a result of fewer out of town special education students, all other revenues appear to be at or around where they were projected to be. Current year expenditures are \$8,202,862. There are currently three line items that have gone over budget. The Board of Selectmen technology line item has been overspent by \$279.45. This is a result of the Registrars needing a new computer to allow them to upload required reports to the State for the elections. Their old computer did not have the capabilities necessary. The Town Hall has also had a lot of problems with its server and battery back-up system that needed to be replaced. The Tax Collector Advertising line item has been overspent by \$245.93. This is a result of an increase in advertising tax sales. This line item will be replenished when the tax sales occur. Money will be reimbursed to the Town for the advertising. The final line item overspent was the transfer station electricity line item by \$54. As discussed at the last meeting this will be reimbursed in April when the Town receives a check from CL&P for electricity generated at the transfer station and sold back. There were no other concerns with expenditures. The Finance Director mentioned that he and the Tax Collector met with Farmington Bank

and Unipay regarding collecting taxes and other fees online by credit card or ach transfers. The Finance Director explained that the Town could collect any fees the Town collects through the online system such as recreation fees, transfer station fees, etc. There is no fee for the Town. All fees are passed on to the taxpayer. For ach fees the taxpayer will pay an additional \$1.50 with their payment for the fee. Credit card payments are based on a percentage which the Finance Director believes to be 2.99% of the transaction. Farmington Bank will allow the Town to open a bank account with them to facilitate receiving the payments for no fee with only a \$100 minimum balance because they receive a percentage of the fees charged to the taxpayer. The Finance Director explained the Town can also get swipe machines to use at the counter. He also explained that he is going to talk to other Town's that are using the system and get feedback on their experiences. Unipay is just now expanding into Connecticut but has many clients in Massachusetts and Maine. The Finance Director explained that there will be a logo on the Town Website that you can click on and it directs you to the Unipay site. The Unipay site will integrate with the tax collectors Quality Data software to allow you to type in your list number for your tax bill and you will see the amount due and you can pay it. Discussion followed and the Finance Director stated he would send the Board of Finance members a link to a sample of the site and asked for them to submit any questions they have for him to send on to Unipay. The Finance Director also discussed the recent bond rating surveillance that was done by Fitch and announced that Fitch has decided to keep the bond rating the same at AA- with a stable outlook. S. Davis asked if anything has been done with the \$100,000 budgeted for the Griswold Housing Authority. The Finance Director stated the funds have not been requested yet.

b) Discussion and possible action on setting 2013 meeting dates.

S. Merchant, Sr asked if anyone was content with the meeting schedule. Everyone was in agreement to keep the same schedule. **MOTION:** D. Webster made a **motion** that was seconded by P. Dorff to accept the schedule as presented on 2013 schedule of meetings. There was no discussion. All in favor; **motion carried.**

c) Discussion and possible action on SEAT invoice.

The Finance Director stated that he was presented with a letter from SEAT to Philip Anthony requesting payment of \$10,544.50. He explained that \$3,261 was for FY 2011, \$3,511.50 was for FY 2012 and \$3,772 was for FY 2013. This would get the Town current on payments to SEAT through the end of the fiscal year. P. Dorff expressed concern that the Town is legally obligated to pay it without a contract. He was also concerned that it should be listed under service contracts and leases and not contributions. The Finance Director explained that going forward it will have its own line item under the Selectmen's department. It should not be listed under contributions as it always has been because it is not a contribution; it is the cost to belong to the system. D. Webster asked what the process would be if the Town decided to withdraw from SEAT. The Finance Director stated he was not sure what process would have to be followed. He believed it require the Selectmen to approve it and S. Merchant, Sr. stated he believed it would go back to a Town meeting because it went to a Town meeting when we joined. P. Dorff asked about the Town legally being obligated to pay. The Finance Director stated that P. Anthony spoke to an attorney who informed him the Town was legally obligated to pay. G. Rooke-Norman inquired that the Town did not have a contract that we know of. The Finance Director stated the only thing he has been able to find on it is the original proposal from 1981 and a letter from the Town stating that the proposal was approved at a Town meeting. There was discussion

regarding the service provided and the route the busses run. Discussion followed regarding the portion that Lisbon pays. The Finance Director stated that Lisbon splits the bill 50/50 with Griswold and is current on their portion of the bill. P. Dorff asked if SEAT had a charter to show how the rates are determined. The Finance Director stated he did not know but explained that if you look at the original proposal it was determined by hours of use. D. Webster asked why if we are in fiscal year 12/13 they are now looking for payment for the last 2 ½ years. The Finance Director stated that they have been trying to get payment for the last 2 ½ years. D. Webster stated in the Board's defense it was listed as a contribution so they did not feel they were obligated to pay the full amount. P. Dorff asked about tabling this for now to get more information. J. Wolkowski and S. Merchant Sr. stated that it is for services that were rendered so we don't have a choice but to pay the bill. D. Webster asked the Finance Director if he was in agreement with the letter that the Town owed SEAT \$10,544.50 to get current with our obligation. The Finance Director answered that he was in agreement. **MOTION:** D. Webster made a **motion** that was seconded by J. Wolkowski to appropriate the funds from the fund balance of \$10,544.50 to get us current with our obligations with Southeast Area Transit District. All in favor; **motion carried.**

4. Old Business

a) Discussion of Town ethics policy

S. Merchant asked the Finance Director how we stood on the ethics issue. The Finance Director stated that he has a final version of the letter that was compiled that he would like to get final approval on while the whole Board was together. He also stated he would like everyone to ok the advisory opinions as well. P. Dorff stated that he was concerned there was a disconnect on what the Ethics Commission could provide. G. Rooke-Norman stated that the ordinance provides that they give two responses, one if there was an actual complaint filed and another that is a request for an advisory opinion. She believes Mr. Sylvestre was offering an informal opinion. P. Dorff asked if the ordinance should be adjusted and is too restrictive but members of the Board did not believe it was too restrictive. S. Merchant mentioned the possibility of a regional ethics commission that has been discussed. He feels this may be the way to go in the future. D. Webster believes training and a question and answer session with the ethics commission could have solved a lot of the problems. There was discussion on the request for advisory opinions. G. Rooke-Norman stated that she would ask "if this person's interest excluded under section 35-10(c). The Finance Director asked if this should go on both advisory opinions. She stated it should. D. Webster stated he was concerned with the attached building official department budget that line 5101 regular part-time payroll does not state that is just the Building Official's salary. The Finance Director stated that he would indicate that on the line item before it is sent to the Ethics Commission. S. Davis asked if it would be pertinent to mention that he does not have line item control over the Board of Education budget. Discussion followed and it was agreed that this would be included in the request for advisory opinion. **MOTION:** P. Dorff made a **motion** that was seconded by G. Rooke-Norman to accept the letter as written and send it to the Selectmen and that we accept the request for advisory opinions as modified and send those to the Ethics Commission. All in favor; **motion carried.**

5. Any Other Business

No other business.

6. **Adjournment: MOTION:** D. Webster made a **motion** that was seconded by G. Rooke-Norman to adjourn. There was no discussion. All in favor; **motion carried.** S. Merchant, Sr. adjourned the meeting at 7:47 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Acting Recording Secretary
Erik Christensen