

**TOWN OF ROWLEY
FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of Meeting October 18, 2016
Rowley Town Hall**

Members Present: Lawrence White, Chairman, Sharon Emery, Vice Chairman, Janet Bridges, Peter Censullo (arrived at 7:20 pm), Paul Jalbert, Dennis Roy, Jami Snow

Others Present: Libby Tucker, Chair of Agricultural Commission; Brian Forget, Superintendent of Triton School District

1. Call to Order: Larry White, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm.
2. Agricultural Commission FY17 Revolving Fund Cap – Libby Tucker requested an increase in the Agricultural Commission revolving fund spending cap of \$1,000. Tucker would like to use the \$1,400 in the fund to pay bills. The Agricultural Commission will go to Spring Town Meeting to request the cap be permanently raised. White noted that this request was voted on and approved by the Board of Selectmen at their meeting October 17, 2016.

Emery moved to approve the spending cap increase for the Agricultural Commission revolving fund. Snow seconded. The vote was unanimous in favor.

2. Review Minutes of September 13, 2016 – Jalbert and Snow were absent on September 13, 2016 and recused themselves from this item and vote.

Bridges moved to approve the meeting minutes of September 13, 2016. Roy seconded. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Censullo arrived at 7:20 pm

3. Discuss October 25, 2016 Meeting Necessity and Future Meeting Dates – The Committee agreed to meet October 25, 2016 to review the Special Town Meeting warrant.
4. Appointment with Brian Forget, Superintendent, Triton School District – Forget stated he became Superintendent on July 1, 2016 and has been meeting with as many constituents as possible, i.e., Boards of Selectmen and Finance Committees of the three district towns, parents, teachers and staff. His discussions are centered around the state of the Triton school district and how the district can improve. His resulting plan will not reflect individual thoughts but he will use data from the meetings to analyze and determine themes and trends, strengths and challenges, and areas on which to focus for improvement.

Forget asked members what they felt were the greatest successes of the Triton school district. Members related their own personal experiences and expressed appreciation with Forget's willingness to come to the committee meeting and listen to their feedback.

School choice was discussed and Forget stated that this area is improving with more students choosing in than choosing out.

Forget asked the committee for their input, as parents and Finance Committee members, on the challenges the district faces. Censullo noted his disappointment with enrollment declines and the cuts in the language program. Jalbert questioned if honors courses are being cut. Forget replied that with diminishing enrollment there are hard choices to make. They try to offer the greatest breadth but with a small student body everything does not fit into the schedule, you can't argue to have a staffing level if there isn't a student body to fill it. Forget noted that they have not seen people leaving the district, rather it is the census data. They are trying to offer as much as they can but need a critical mass to offer a class so it is financially feasible. In some areas, they offer "honors contracts" instead of offering a full honors class.

White discussed the budget process and stated in the past it has been a bottom up budget, and the towns do not get to see a number until the budget has been established. At that point, it is too late to do anything about it. White stated he would rather have a top down budget so the towns will know what it is working with. Forget explained that they do try to determine a foundation number but the district has to wait for the state formula which is not given in a timely manner. White stated that he understands the number cannot be exact but a working knowledge would be very helpful for the budget process. Right now, the town gets hit with the number after the budget is done and he would like to try a different process. Discussion continued on budget planning and processes.

Forget asked the members what they thought were core strengths, things the district should protect at all cost. Member replies and discussion topics included strong academics, technology education, breadth of opportunity, and good tools (i.e., computers).

Forget asked if there is a past event that may still be affecting the district either negatively or positively. White said he felt the budgeting process was a negative. He has always felt it was "them versus us", secretive and non-conducive to cooperation and understanding.

Forget asked if there is anything that needed his immediate attention. Bridges suggested that he dig into contracts, i.e., retiree health benefits and health insurance which is a big cost. Roy felt he should look at accountability report to see if Forget can make this closer to his goals. Censullo brought up inconsistency in the amount of homework and Forget agreed, stating this subject is on his list to address.

Jalbert asked about the percentage of kids graduating. Forget stated that the new principal is making this a goal and that the schools will do whatever they can to provide best the opportunity for every student. If a student drops out they do everything possible to keep them in.

Roy expressed his appreciation to Forget for always being responsive to their e-mails and the Committee thanked him for coming to the meeting and for the forthright discussion.

5. Review Monthly Appropriation Report – Roy stated there were some departments with slight concern but for most part all are on target, no red flags at this point.

6. Adjourn – Bridges moved to adjourn. Jalbert seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor at 8:35 pm.

Next Meeting: October 25, 2016 at 7:15 pm, Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,

Theresa Coffey
Finance Committee Secretary

Documents Attached:

- Agenda October 18, 2016
- Minutes of Meeting September 13, 2016
- Monthly Appropriation Report July to September 2016