



Finance Committee Town of Natick Massachusetts 01760

April 2, 2009

Greetings to all Town Meeting Members and Citizens of Natick,

This report contains the Town of Natick Finance Committee recommendation regarding appropriations for Fiscal Year 2009 (Article 1) and Fiscal Year 2010 budgets as well as capital equipment and improvement requests, among other financial matters. In addition, this report contains recommendations on the non-financial 2009 Annual Spring Town Meeting Warrant Articles, in accordance with the Finance Committee's responsibilities outlined within the Town's Charter & Bylaws.

Each of the Finance Committee recommendations was made after conducting a duly noticed public hearing and open meetings of the both the Finance Committee as a whole and Finance Committee sub-committees. We took into account comments and data gathered from Warrant Article sponsors, town department heads, the town administration, town boards, commissions and committees, and the public at-large.

The Finance Committee made its recommendations after having held eighteen (18) Public Hearings for input and discussion during our full committee hearings held on January 6th, 27th and 29th, as well as on February 3rd, 5th, 12th, 24th and 26th. The closing month of meetings were held on March 3rd, 5th, 10th, 12th, 17th, 19th, 24th, 26th, 28th and finally on the 31st. In addition to this, there were Sub-Committee meetings, most numerous were the School Sub-Committee meetings. As has become tradition, there is an additional Finance Committee hearing date scheduled for April 14th the first night of Town Meeting at Wilson Middle School.

The Fiscal Year 2010 Budget season has been an arduous process at best for the Finance Committee as well as both the Town & School Administrations and the Board of Selectmen. A shortfall of \$4,900,000 in revenue within the Town Administrator's initially proposed budget lead to a comprehensive review of all potential revenue streams and cost cutting measures.

While we patiently waited to hear about the reduced State Aid numbers and continued to hear of massive economic problems throughout the whole world, not just in the community of Natick. The Financial Planning Committee reviewed and then recommended that all "shared" expenses and revenues, which also included the recently increased trash fees, be split between the School (61%) and Town (39%) departments. This split then moved forward to the Board of Selectmen & School Committee for the final ratification process.

This year's budget hearing sessions have been similar to that of a Gran Prix race in that there were many, many blind curves in the road as we moved along through our hearings. Our budget review process is difficult enough in a "normal" year, whatever that may be, after a difficult override review last year, we were now reviewing serious budget cuts this year.

There were times when I thought we were going to be all set and as we moved forward we found ourselves going around one sharp curve after another, encountering one question after another, concerning available local receipt revenues, union contract considerations and early retirement programs to just name a few.

The committee reviewed each department's budget very carefully to gain the best understanding of the potential Town and School employee layoffs, early retirements and position reassignments. This was a process that the Finance Committee took quite seriously, while trying to fully understand the impacts that all of the proposed cuts would have on the "fair balance" of services that the Town provides to its citizens.

Once again, it is quite clear to me that the Finance Committee hearings have become the "hot" local Pegasus TV program. I have had a number of citizen's comment favorably on the amount of information that we continue to dig in to.

For those of you who do watch our hearings, you know that as Chairman I have a habit of trying to maintain a certain level of humor during our hearings. This humor has been well received, but I can assure you that I and all of the members do take the responsibilities of our Committee very seriously and humor is merely used by me to bring a bit of levity to the long process that we undertake.

This review process is undertaken by a committee of fifteen citizens, it is a tedious process at best and as I have said before, the higher visibility has created a meeting atmosphere that brings about the added pressure of being local TV personalities to our members. We have had a number of meetings that have run past midnight and our last two were attended by a solid core group of members until 1:30 & 2:45 in the morning in order to accomplish our responsibilities. To that I would like to thank each and every one of my members and I would ask that if you happen to meet one of our members, please say "Thank You" for a job well done as a VOLUNTEER!!

The Finance Committee as a whole would like to especially express its thanks and appreciation for the patience of the Town Administrator Martha White, Deputy Town Administrator Michael Young, the Town Department Heads and Officials as well as the other Members of boards and committees, and to Natick's citizens for their cooperation and participation during the Warrant Article hearings, the budget planning process and consideration of complex fiscal issues and concerns.

This year I would to again like to thank our recording secretary, Ms. Joyce Tower. Joyce spends many hours attending our meetings, even the ones that go until 2:45 AM and then has to transcribe our minutes, which she does with great detail. Thank you Joyce!!

One other individual that I would like to mention is our new Interim Town Clerk, Onorina Maloney. I would like to nominate Ms. Maloney and the Town Clerks Department for the most improved budget presentation. It was quite apparent that Ms. Maloney has brought a new level of professionalism and enthusiasm to that department.

In closing, I can assure the citizens of Natick that the administration and the employees of the Town of Natick have made it clear that they are focused on seeking out the efficiencies concerning the Town's revenues and expenses.

The years ahead are not looking any rosier than this year at this point but I am an optimist and I do believe with good fiscal management, while keeping an eye on the many different facets of services that this Town provides, we will continue to be a community that people want to live in and be proud of !!

Respectfully Submitted,



Richard R. Jennett, Chairman
on behalf of the Natick Finance Committee

Committee Members:

Richard P. Jennett, Chairman
James Everett , Vice Chairman
Jonathan Freedman, Secretary
Bruce Wright
Bruce Gorton

Cathi Collins
Christine Weithman
John Horrigan
Kenneth Hoyt
Mari Barrera

Patrick Haswell
Paul Griesmer
Richard Sullivan
Richard Sidney
Robert Hickman