

MINUTES

MIDDLEFIELD FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

FEBRUARY 9, 2016

PRESENT: Joe Kearns, Scott Artioli, Judy Hoag, Dale Hoag and Ed Vivier

The meeting opened at 7:05 pm.

Tonight our finance committee will start interviewing the various department heads regarding their 2017 budget requirements. Chief of Police Thomas Austin will be our dept. head for tonight's meeting. Chief Austin began the interview by announcing that he is thinking of retiring from his position within 3.5 years if the powers in Boston approve his extension. He noted that we should start thinking now as to what we will do regarding our town police dept. He shared that there are only 2 state troopers for the 15 hilltowns and they are based in Russell a good ways away, especially in an emergency. He also explained that the cost of maintaining our own department would continue to rise as we compete with the surrounding towns for qualified officers. Do we share departments with a neighboring town, or possibly a regional approach; these are all things that we must at least start to consider and plan for, not waiting until the last minute and settling for less than the best. Our town's safety, the safety of our residents must be foremost but in a manner that our taxpayers can afford. Chief Austin explained that in any major disaster, Middlefield would be on our own for at least the first 3 days, possibly longer. He also said that our elderly population is growing, as it is in all our hilltowns, making the need for a police dept. even more vital. Better radio communication both for our police and fire departments is also needed, with cell towers for increased town coverage at the top of the chief's to do list.

Regarding the upcoming budget, Chief Austin said it essentially would be the same as this year's though he suggested that we may want to start to put some money in a special fund which could be used to hire a new police chief in a few years.

Our finance committee would like to thank Chief Austin for his very knowledgeable and excellent presentation. At our next meeting we will invite Fire Chief Ron Radwich.

The minutes of the January 26, 2016 meeting were unanimously accepted as read.

The next meeting will be February 23, 2016 at 7:00 pm.

The meeting closed at 8:06 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ed Vivier
Secretary

