

VOTER INFORMATION BULLETIN

TOWN OF DOUGLAS

NOVEMBER 16, 2015

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
Monday, November 16, 2015 at 7:00 pm
Douglas High School Auditorium
33 Davis Street

FINANCE COMMITTEE MESSAGE

The fall Special Town Meeting should be considered mostly unremarkable. The report of the Strategic Budget Committee at the start of the meeting will outline its findings to assist the citizens of Douglas in their understanding of current Town services and projected budgetary shortfalls. The majority of the following articles are standard and involve transfers of insurance payments, budgetary adjustments, approval of prior year bills, acceptance of a re-structured State law, and the acceptance of a gift of land. An important Capital Project has now become urgent and, unfortunately, much more complicated and costly; this requires additional funding. Most financial articles are funded through transfers from Free Cash. This continuing Economic Development Initiative is a process that should position the Town of Douglas to benefit from critically needed business growth moving into the Blackstone Valley.

The Finance Committee reviewed these articles and presents our recommendations to the Town Meeting. Our Committee is in need of 2 members to join with us for what may prove to be a challenging FY2017 budget season.

Table with 2 columns: Article Number and Article Description. Articles include Report of Strategic Budget Committee, Prior Year Bills, Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Transfers/Amendments, Insurance Funds Transfer Related to Water Damage at the Intermediate Elementary School, Transfer from Article 2 STM 6-11-12 High School Computer Network Infrastructure, Transfer from Free Cash to OPEB Account, Transfer from Insurance Receipts Reserved for Appropriation to School Department, Transfer from Free Cash to Stabilization Account (Ambulance Payment), Senior Tax Work-off Program - Local Acceptance of MGL Ch. 59 Section 5K, Amend Article 8 of the ATM 5-5-14 Capital Projects, Accept MGL Ch. 44 Section 53F3/4 - PEG Access and Cable Related Fund, Economic Development Initiative, and Accept Gift of 5.49 Acres of Land on Martin Road - Map 169, Lot 10.

Article 1. Report of the Strategic Budget Committee

To hear the report of the Strategic Budget Committee, or take any other action related thereto.

Explanation: Printed information and links to taped presentations can be found at -- http://www.douglasma.org/index.php/pages/committees/strategic\_budget\_committee

Finance Committee: Recommend acceptance of report

Article 2. Prior Year Bills

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds the following sums of money to pay the following prior year's bill:

School Department

Ward's Science \$263.51

Water & Sewer Department

RH White \$4,209.00

Or take any other action related thereto.

Explanation: These invoices were received after the end of year cut-off date for billing the Town. The services/products were delivered. If approved, the amounts will be paid from the current year budgets of the respective departments. Since they are prior year invoices, Town Meeting approval is necessary to process payment.

Finance Committee: Recommend

### **Article 3. Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Transfers/Amendments**

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds such sums of money as are necessary to fund the following amendments to Article 2 of the Annual Town Meeting of May 4, 2015:

Increase Selectmen's Expenses by	<b>\$15,000</b>
Increase Ambulance Wages by	<b>\$125,000</b>
Increase Reserve Fund by	<b>\$11,500</b>
Increase Douglas Schools – Personnel & Expenses by	<b>\$220,000</b>
Increase Public Building Maintenance Wages by	<b>\$7,500</b>
Decrease School Transportation by	<b>\$30,000</b>

Or take any other action related thereto.

**Explanation:** These appropriations/transfers show requested changes from the Annual Town Meeting amounts voted in May. They have varying but sound budgetary reasons.

**Finance Committee: Recommend**

### **Article 4. Insurance Funds Transfer Related to Water Damage at the Intermediate Elementary School**

To see if the Town will vote to transfer from the Insurance Reimbursement Receipts Reserved for Appropriation Account the sum of **\$116,548.34** to the Intermediate Elementary School Building Project Account (Middle School Repair Project), or take any other action related thereto.

**Explanation:** This is the final insurance payment to the Town for water damages incurred during construction at the Intermediate Elementary School. The funds are being transferred to the IES School Building Project.

**Finance Committee: Recommend**

### **Article 5. Transfer from Article 2 STM 6-11-12 High School Computer Network Infrastructure**

To see if the Town will vote to transfer from the High School Computer Network Infrastructure Account the sum of **\$1,986** to the New Elementary School Construction Account, or take any other action related thereto.

**Explanation:** This project is completed and needs to be closed out. They should be closed out from a very old account per the Auditors. This transfer accomplishes that need.

**Finance Committee: Recommend**

### **Article 6. Transfer from Free Cash to the OPEB Account**

To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of **\$28,000** from Free Cash to the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Account, or take any other action related thereto

**Explanation:** The remaining funds in the Health Insurance Account from FY2015 are being transferred to the OPEB Account. This transfer continues the Town's effort to reduce the 'unfunded liability' of future Douglas retiree health insurance costs.

**Finance Committee: Recommend**

### **Article 7. Transfer from Insurance Receipts Reserved for Appropriation to School Department**

To see if the Town will vote to transfer from Insurance Receipts Reserved for Appropriation the sum of **\$22,872.53** to Douglas Schools – Personnel & Expenses, or take any other action related thereto.

**Explanation:** This article transfers funds to the School Department to repair/replace damaged items.

**Finance Committee: Recommend**

### **Article 8. Transfer from Free Cash to the Stabilization Account (Ambulance Payment)**

To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of **\$10,804** from Free Cash to the Stabilization Account, or take any other action related thereto.

**Explanation:** This specifically targets remaining FY2015 funds from the Ambulance Department to be used to reimburse the Stabilization Fund for purchase of the newest Ambulance.

**Finance Committee: Recommend**

**Article 9. Senior Tax Work-off Program – Local Acceptance of MGL Ch. 59 Section 5K**

To see if the Town will vote to adjust the exemption allowed per MGL Chapter 59 Section 5K, by allowing the maximum reduction of the real property tax bill to be based on 125 volunteer service hours in a given tax year, rather than \$1,000, or take any other action related thereto.

**Explanation:** The Statute accounts for changes in the minimum wage of the Commonwealth and now uses Service Hours, that can be multiplied by the minimum wage, rather than a fixed amount.

**Finance Committee: Recommend**

**Article 10. Amend Article 8 of the ATM 5-5-14 Capital Projects**

To see if the Town will vote to amend Article 8 of the Annual Town Meeting of May 5, 2014 by transferring the sum of \$200,000 from Free Cash to the Municipal Center HVAC Replacement, Gym Roof Replacement, and 1st Floor Window Replacement – Capital Projects, for purposes of Environmental Remediation and other additional project costs, or take any other action related thereto.

**Explanation:** The environmental remediation costs for the Boiler Project at the Municipal Center have caused project costs to dramatically escalate. The Town will endeavor to minimize these factors to the best of its ability.

**Finance Committee: Recommend**

**Article 11. Accept MGL Ch. 44 Section 53F3/4 – PEG Access and Cable Related Fund**

To see if the Town will vote to accept the provisions of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 53F ¾ in order to establish a separate revenue account to be known as the “PEG Access and Cable Related Fund”, into which will be deposited funds received in connection with a franchise agreement between the Town’s cable Operator and the Town and from which monies shall only be appropriated for cable related purposes consistent with the franchise agreement, including, but not limited to: (i) support of public, educational or governmental access cable television services; (ii) monitoring compliance of the cable operator with the franchise agreement; or (iii) preparing for renewal of the franchise license, or take any other action related thereto.

**Explanation:** The funds received from Charter for PEG access are now subject to yearly appropriation through a special revenue account under Chapter 44, Section 53 F 3/4. This will now be a regular article at our Annual Town Meeting. This change has been introduced by the Department of Revenue for purposes of review, measurement and over-sight.

**Finance Committee: Recommend**

**Article 12. Economic Development Initiative**

To see if the Town will vote to transfer from Free Cash the sum of \$15,000 to pay for consultants, and/or the salary of a part time Economic Development Professional, for planning, grant writing, and other services associated with economic development in the Town of Douglas, under the direction of the Board of Selectmen, or take any other action related thereto.

**Explanation:** Professional assistance in this area will enable the Town to better position itself for expected Economic Development. It will ensure that the focus towards improving Commercial/Industrial Development is shared by all stakeholders.

**Finance Committee: Defer Recommendation until Special Town Meeting**

**Article 13. Accept Gift of 5.49 Acres of Land on Martin Road - Map 169, Lot 10**

To see if the Town will vote to accept a certain parcel of vacant land known as Map 169 Lot 10 located off of the easterly side of Martin Road more particularly bounded and described as follows:

A certain parcel of woodland situated in the easterly part of the Town of Douglas, otherwise known as the Nahum Leg lot located off the easterly side of Martin Road in the so-called village of East Douglas more particularly bounded as follows:

BEGINNING at the northwesterly corner of the premises herein described at a stake and stones;

THENCE E. 9 degrees N. by land of Warren Hung, 58 rods to a stake and stones;

THENCE S. 9 degrees E. 15 rods to heap of stones;

THENCE W. 9 degrees S. 58 rods to land of the heirs of Caleb Hill to a stake and stones;

THENCE N. 9 degrees W. 15 rods to the bounds of first named above.

Containing 5 acres and 70 rods of land more or less.

Together with all of the privileges and appurtenances to the same belonging.

The above described premises are owned by the trustees of the Walter T. Murphy Realty Trust under Declaration of Trust and will be conveyed to the Town as a gift of land, or take any other action related thereto.

**Explanation:** This property abuts land already owned by the Town of Douglas. All reviews of the property will take place prior to the Town taking possession of the land.

**Finance Committee: Recommend**

### STRATEGIC BUDGET COMMITTEE INFORMATION

Information related to the work of the Strategic Budget Committee can be found on the Town website at the Strategic Budget Committee's home page - [http://www.douglasma.org/index.php/pages/committees/strategic\\_budget\\_committee](http://www.douglasma.org/index.php/pages/committees/strategic_budget_committee)

Links can also be found on the Town website homepage at [www.douglasma.org](http://www.douglasma.org)

# DOUGLAS

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