MINUTES:
Phil Landine made a motion to approve the minutes of July 11, 2016. Brad second. Vote five to approve the minutes of July 11, 2016 as presented and two abstained (Richard Gobi, Robert Blozie).

FY16 WRAPUP: Lori Loughlin said that she received a last minute phone call from the Selectboard asking her to sign the End of Year Budget Transfers on the day of the call. She was told if she didn’t sign them (on behalf of the Advisory Committee) it would require a town meeting to approve the budget transfers. She reluctantly signed them to avoid the cost of an additional town meeting. Committee members expressed their displeasure with the lack of communication and manner in which this was handled as our committee had no opportunity to review the requests prior to signing.

The accountant brought in the most recent warrants at 6:30 p.m. She went over the previously signed End of Year Budget Transfers and answered all questions. Out of a total of $39,658.61 transferred to fund budget deficits, $17,804.82 was transferred from the Group Insurance Account. Richard Gobi asked the accountant what would she do if the there was not enough money left in the Group Insurance Account and other accounts to fund the deficit. She responded that she would have to go from department to department to find unspent dollars. When questioned about whether departments had adhered to the budget freeze put in place by the Selectboard earlier she indicated some departments had not.

The accountant reviewed the West Brookfield encumbrances for Fiscal Year 2016 and prior years amounting to $415,973.15 plus Water Department $3,671.88. The accountant indicated which encumbrances were the result of town meeting articles and those that were requested by department heads. When questioned Marie explained those related to articles could be moved back to free cash if the person(s) who sponsored the original article advised that the money was no longer needed for the reason indicated in the article or through a town meeting vote. The committee had many questions regarding the reason for department requested encumbrances, particularly in
light of this year’s budget freeze. Brad Hibbard suggested there be a policy whereby departments wanting to encumber funds should forward a written request to the Selectboard with the specific reason they are requesting the encumbrance. The accountant stated that as of this date she did not have an accurate accounting of outstanding unpaid invoices for departments who had received goods and services prior to July 1st. As an example she encumbered $14,039.24 in the Fire Department expense account because it has been a practice of the former Fire Chief to expend his excess expense funds during the last days of the fiscal year. She has received no information on Fire Department expenses to date. Phil Landine questioned why the town does not have a purchase order system where departments request funds for non-emergency goods and services prior to ordering them. Marie said some departments do use purchase orders but there is no uniformity. Phil Landine asked what would prevent a person from walking into a local vendor and procuring items on the town’s account. Brad Hibbard asked the accountant if the Town had experienced a problem like this in the past and she stated yes. The committee is concerned about the lack of checks and balances in the current procurement process.

The same written request should apply to article sponsors who want to encumber those funds. As an example the committee questioned the request to encumber the town hall chimney repair monies that were approved at town meeting several years ago. If the work hasn’t been completed in several years and we’re still encumbering the funds year after year someone should explain in writing the reason for the continued encumbrance or release the funds to free cash.

The committee discussed the budgeting process and the need for departments to remain within their respective budgets, excepting emergency situations. It appears that many of the departments that overspent knew or should have known of the expected deficit prior to the end of the fiscal year. Departments should be required to notify the Selectboard of the reason for the expected deficit in a timely manner and request their authorization to deficit spend. Brad Hibbard pointed out that if a department continuously overspends its authorized budget it should be the taxpayer’s decision to allow this pattern to continue or cut services. The Accountant asked what the school department does if it needs to overspend its budget. Lori and Phil said in those cases the school must go to the School Committee for authorization.

The accountant said there should be an additional $225,225.19 in free cash when the year closes out, not including unspent encumbrances. The committee thanked Marie for attending our meeting and asked if she would stay on for Pam Griffing’s presentation on the proposed changes to the budgeting process.
DRAFT OF PROPOSED BUDGET FORM: Pam Griffing provided those in attendance with a draft copy of the proposed changes to the budget form. In general, the proposal extends the current line item budget from two lines (salaries and expenses) to 2 salary categories and 17 expense categories. The smaller departments would see very little or no changes while larger departments would see their number of expense lines increased. This will allow the town to more effectively track expenditures. Marie was in agreement with the proposed changes and asked that Pam forward her a copy of the current draft for review. Pam will forward copies to the accountant and members of the committee for review and comment.

Pam Griffing explained she would like to expand the current single salary category into two categories, salaried positions and stipend positions. The accountant went through the current budgets and provided the required salary information. The committee asked if there was a policy on how stipends are paid. Marie said some individuals are paid 1/12th monthly and others quarterly or in a lump sum. Brad asked if it would make sense to put all stipend employees on a 1/12th schedule provide better accountability to the process. Marie agreed and said it would not increase her work load as the information is entered electronically into the payroll system.

At our request the accountant will attend our next meeting.

TAX COLLECTOR & TREASURER ELECTED TO APPOINTED. We will discuss at our next meeting.

EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE PROPOSAL: Robert Blozie said the police rejected the insurance proposal. Brad asked if there is a plan and timeline in place for attempting to get buy-in from unions and employees to implement the proposed changes. Lori Loughlin will follow up with the Selectboard.

DEVELOP PRIORITY LIST OF GOALS FOR UPCOMING YEAR: We will discuss at next meeting. Brad will forward committee members copies of the current list of suggested goals for review.

OTHER BUSINESS: Resident Deb Provencher said it was her belief that the town will be receiving $433,000 in Mass Lottery receipts and questioned when we get this and where does it go. Pam Griffing said she will look into it.

Phil Landine said the Town of Warren passed the school budget article by a margin of 40 votes. Many residents attended the meeting.
Richard Gobi commented that the Town could save money by eliminating the post office boxes at the Post Office and erecting boxes at the Town Hall for RFD service.

Members were given a copy of Fire Chief Paul Lupacchino’s Separation Agreement to review and discuss at our next meeting.

Phil Landine made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Brad Hibbard second. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, August 16, 2016 at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine M. Long
Secretary