

BOARD of SELECTMEN

April 6, 2016

The Deerfield Board of Selectmen held a public meeting on Wednesday, April 6, 2016, at 6:30 PM, at the Town Offices, 8 Conway Street, South Deerfield.

PRESENT: Mark Gilmore (Chair), Carolyn Shores Ness

ABSENT: David Wolfram

ALSO PRESENT: Douglas Finn

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 PM, and a quorum was declared.

Presentations

Joint Meeting with Selectmen / Finance Committee

Dylan Korpita, Chair of the Finance Committee, called the Finance Committee to order at 6:34 PM, with a quorum of 5/7.

Mr. Korpita made initial comments.

OPEB

Mr. Korpita asked about whether there was a long-term plan for OPEB.

Ms. Ness spoke about her personal point of view, and stated that, in light of the GASB74 audit due to be completed in FY17, she was not committed to a specific plan or funding level.

Mr. Gilmore stated that his concerns were primarily about the funding model. As the town was covering the OPEB obligations on a cash basis now, there seemed to be no urgency. However, putting some money towards OPEB should be pursued.

Mr. Gilmore asked if there was consensus on the part of the Finance Committee. Reply: no.

Mr. Korpita stated that his larger concern was the model as it was understood at that point – setting up capital investments in order to use the dividends to pay for OPEB costs.

Ms. Ness also stated her concern with setting money aside for long-term savings.

Mr. Gilmore stated that, previously, the town had set up long-term 'savings' accounts for town costs, but had been declared an invalid method of financing.

Question: If we begin funding at a level, will we be expected to continue funding at this level?

Answer: Not at this time.

There was further discussion about various expectations related to OPEB, with the general sense that there was no establish methods or benchmarks.

Gilmore: "This is a wait-and-see, as far as I'm concerned."

The general consensus was that, while OPEB is "not going away", no strong affinity for a funding level was held by any party.

The Finance Committee will be meeting again on April 11, and will provide a recommendation to the Town Administrator, which will be included in the budget presentation on April 12.

COLA for Step 10 Employees

Mr. Korpita asked if there was a process related to establishing or recommending Cost Of Living Adjustments (COLA) for town employees.

Mr. Gilmore stated that his recollection was that town employees were required to receive a performance review that qualified them for a cost-of-living adjustment above Step 10. However, this process was dependent on adherence to a bi- or tri-annual review of the salary schedule, and adjustment of the schedule so as to keep it in line with cost of living.

There was discussion about past, current, and potential future efforts to create personnel, and financial policies that will help to provide a more sustainable operating environment.

Mr. Healy reiterated Mr. Gilmore's comments about the necessity of conducting performance evaluations on an annual basis.

Mr. Upton stated about establishing a process that was consistent, and reliable. The larger goals make sense, but without the process fixed in place, recommendations related to budget items and personnel are more difficult to determine.

Mr. Korpita asked about COLA, and how it was determined. There was discussion related to the history of how cost of living adjustments had been established.

Community Preservation Act

Mr. Korpita asked as about the CPA tax, and whether the board had considered reducing or discontinuing it. There was some discussion as to whether or not the money was being used properly.

Mr. Korpita asked about the restrictions on the budget; whether or not the money could be used for other items.

Mr. Paciorek reiterated the balances in the account, and expressed concern related to the CPA account. There was discussion as to the potential uses of CPA funds; and what a “best use” would look like.

The past efforts related to senior housing were discussed. Potential avenues of action (such as conversations related to the Franklin Regional Housing Authority, and other town entities) were discussed.

School Resource Officer

Mr. Korpita asked about the proposed school resource officer, funding, and other aspects of the proposal.

Mr. Gilmore spoke about the history of the efforts to fund a school resource officer.

The necessity of a school resource officer, and the state mandate for same, was discussed. The ability of the town and schools to ‘opt-out’ was discussed. Korpita: If the schools aren’t behind the program, will it be successful?

Mr. Korpita expressed his concern about the School Resource Officer as an indication of a larger problem – new programs and services being offered in one year, and then needing to be funded in later years.

There was discussion about the buy-in for the positing on the part of the schools, and the potential for future action in relation to the position, should that not be the case.

Mr. Finn was directed that adding the school resource officer costs into our ‘foundation budget’ calculations. Mr. Finn asked if the insurance costs, related to DES, should be included in the foundation calculation. Answer: Yes.

Proposition 2 ½, and school funding.

Mr. Korpita asked about engaging in discussions with the schools, in relation to their financial planning practices, and the limits of Proposition 2 ½. The amount of state aid was reviewed.

The possibility of elementary school regionalization was discussed. The potential for creating a ‘charter-school’ model (such as a math/science academy) was discussed.

Current legislation related to school funding was discussed. The rationale behind school choice was discussed.

Free Cash Targets

Mr. Korpita asked about a target for free cash. The payment of the so-called “energy loan” with funds from the stabilization fund vs. free cash was discussed. A ‘free cash’ policy was discussed. The historical use of free cash was discussed. The importance of transparency in any policy was stressed.

The importance of preventative maintenance was discussed; the scope of a potential preventative maintenance program was discussed. The need to inventory, assess, prioritize and schedule maintenance of buildings, equipment, and public works was discussed.

Updated Warrant Article Information

Mr. Korpita requested updated information related to the Mosquito Control District article, and Montague Legal Defense article.

Ms. Ness discussed state, federal and local developments related to combating the Zika virus and mosquito abatement.

There was extensive discussion related to the efforts of the local coalition in related to the mosquito control district.

Mr. Korpita asked for a source of written information related to both articles. Ms. Ness provided verbal information related to both articles.

There was further discussion related to Montague’s efforts related to the DPU.

Wastewater Treatment Plants

Mr. Korpita asked about the proposed change to the Town Bylaws, related to how costs related to Wastewater operations could be assessed. Mr. Gilmore spoke to the current funding model, and the need for future expansion of the system.

Mr. Upton spoke to his concerns related to how sewers would be funded, and his concern that the system could be funded through general taxation, instead of through sewer fees.

Mr. Upton will submit his questions to the Town Administrator for inclusion in the public information session on April 12.

Mr. Bruce Hunter (South Main Street) asked as to whether appointing Sewer Commission, consisting of members separate from the Board of Selectmen) could be considered. Answer: Absolutely.

Mr. Hunter asked whether a program of tax abatement in exchange for service could be considered. Answer: we can look into it.

Ms. Ness asked the Town Administrator to look into a state program that provided tax offsets for seniors who donate time to the Town.

Mr. Paciorek stated that he was not opposed to supporting sewer projects through taxation, as the sewer system helps to support local development; however, Mr. Paciorek asked for moderation when considering sewer system maintenance and expansion.

The public information session was set for Tuesday, April 12, 6:30 PM.

At 9:12 PM, the Finance Committee adjourned.

Review of Minutes

Minutes of previous meetings were reviewed.

It was MOVED by Ness, SECONDED by Gilmore

To approve the minutes of February 10, February 11, February 24, March 9, and March 18.

VOTED: 2, 0, 0.

Select Board Comments

SCEMS Update

Mr. Finn provided an update on the development of the SCEMS RFP, and asked for approval to publish the RFP.

It was MOVED by Gilmore, SECONDED By Ness

To authorize publication of the RFP, pending individual review and authorization by signature.

VOTED: 2, 0, 0.

Tilton Library Updates:

Mr. Gilmore reminded the viewers that upcoming presentations related to plans for the Tilton Library will be forthcoming, and recommended attendance.

Board of Health Updates

Ms. Ness asked that a letter of support for the mosquito control district be drafted by the Town Administrator. The letter should: indicate support, generally, for the program; express concern about the cost of participation; express concern about the 'turnaround' time of testing.

It was MOVED by Ness, SECONDED by Gilmore

To develop and send a letter in support for the mosquito control district.

VOTED: 2, 0, 0.

Mr. Finn will consult with Ms. Ness on the development of the letter.

Ms. Ness stated that she did testify at the public hearing held by the DPU. Ms. Ness summarized her comments: objections to the project based on MGL Article 97; the Town's own order; and archaeological concerns related to the route of the project.

If the pipeline is permitted, health inventories along the pipeline's corridor will be conducted, to monitor the health effects of the anticipated metering station.

DISCUSSION / DECISION items

NEPN Host Agreement

The second draft of the NEPN Host Agreement was reviewed.

It was MOVED by Gilmore, SECONDED by Ness

To approve the host agreement, upon satisfactory review of legal counsel, and confirmation of payment schedule.

VOTED: 2, 0, 0.

Eaglebrook School – Chapter 61A Right of First Refusal Release and Waiver

A letter requesting release of the Chapter 61A lien on a certain parcel.

There was some question as to whether the release could be done without a formal public hearing.

It was MOVED by Ness, SECONDED by Gilmore

To authorize the release of first refusal, and waive the 120 day waiting period, pending confirmation of their ability to legally do so.

VOTED: 2, 0, 0.

The board reviewed the notification of Chapter 90 funding for Fy2017. Ms. Ness requested the amount of Chapter 90 funding from Fy2016. Mr. Finn will provide the information as quickly as possible.

Deerfield Lions Club request

It as MOVED by Ness, SECONDED by Gilmore.

To proclaim April 12 as "Deerfield Lions Day"

VOTED: 2, 0, 0.

ITA Report

Mr. Finn had no report, but thanked the board for their continued support.

Adjourn

It was MOVED by Gilmore, SECONDED by Ness

TO ADJOURN with the signing of the warrant.

VOTED: 2, 0, 0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Douglas C. Finn