



OFFICE OF THE  
Advisory Board  
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September 8, 2014

Present: Ron Mikol, Harold Simmons, Dana Metzler, Christine Muir, Kevin Welch, Pam Crocker  
Attending: Madonna McKenzie, Interim Town Administrator

The meeting opened at 7 p.m.

Prior Minutes

The meeting minutes for July 14, 2014 were unanimously approved with one minor correction: Essex Aggie school is in Danvers, not Beverly. Christine wrote the correction by hand and all members initialed it when signing approval.

Library FY15 Budget Adjustment

Library Director Mary Beth Pallis and Trustees John Callahan and Joanne Mikol appeared before the board to discuss the library's current fiscal year budget. There are two issues: one, the current budget is not adequate to meet state certification requirements; two, the Merrimack Valley Library Consortium (MVLC) dues are about \$1,400 higher than anticipated. The consortium bill arrived July 1, after our budget was already passed.

Mary Beth requested a transfer of \$1,937 from Reserves to Library Expenses line item to cover both issues. (Liz Babbitt, of the State Board of Library Commissioners, calculated that \$1,937 covers the amount needed to meet state certification requirements.) The Reserve account balance is \$30,000 as nothing has been drawn from it yet.

Dana requested further details on how the \$1,937 amount was calculated; his estimate was closer to \$4,000. We need to understand how this number is calculated so that our future budget planning is accurate. Christine asked that the financial requirement to meet state certification be part of the budget narrative going forward, so we always know what our minimum obligation is. Mary Beth noted that engineering costs, such as those for the climate control system, be kept separate from library spending so they do not impact the certification status.

The board unanimously approved the transfer of \$1,937 from Reserves to Library Expenses.

Capital Planning Committee

Town Administrator Madonna McKenzie said that issues such as climate control and maintenance spending be considered by a Capital Planning Committee, for which she is still looking for members. Two residents have already committed to the committee; Madonna would like 3-5 additional members. The committee would meet monthly and each member would have tasks to complete outside the meeting times. One goal for the committee is to complete a five-year plan for Dunstable.

Free Cash

Accountant Kim Fales estimates that free cash for FY14 will be approximately \$466,000, including a one-time reimbursement from FEMA in the amount of \$58,000 for expenses related to the snowstorm two years ago. Free cash is not yet certified.

Special Town Meeting

Madonna reported on several potential articles for the Special Town Meeting currently scheduled for Monday, October 20, 2014.

Fire Chief Brian Rich has put forth an article to pay for the purchase and installation of Keltron radio boxes to replace the current dispatch system for four town buildings, including town hall, library, police and fire stations. A new system must be implemented because dispatch now goes to Groton instead of Pepperell. The Keltron units are \$2,450 each so the total for all four buildings is \$9,800. It is reasonable to put in two this year and two next year. The Groton Police have approved this plan. No taxes or permits are needed. The units are probably backward-compatible and have a decent life span.

The fire chief has also put forth an article for \$950-\$2,100 to inspect the alarm and sprinkler systems in all four town buildings. Dana noted that this amount is something we could probably transfer out of reserves and build into operating budget for future years, rather than put forth at a town meeting. The inspections do need to occur every year and should be included in annual budgeting.

There are two zoning bylaw articles, which were originally submitted as one but town counsel thought it was better separated into two articles.

Two articles are listed for CPA funding transfers, related to a feasibility study for the Best triangle land and Pathways.

The Road Commissioners have proposed an article for a \$200,000 temporary salt shed to be raised before this winter as the current salt shed has collapsed and cannot be used this year. Dana suggested that we may be able to put this in as a debt exclusion, reducing the amount by \$60,000 set aside previously and supplemented by Chapter 90 money.

A second article from the Road Commissioners is related to the reconstruction of Route 113 in front of the cemetery. The engineering costs, which would likely be over \$100,000, are the town's responsibility but the state would pay for the actual road construction.

There is an unpaid bill of about \$1,500 for the Recreation Department lights or energy.

The Police Department is requesting an article to purchase the cruisers that were pulled from the budget during the end of the cycle in order to reduce the override request. The age, mileage and repair costs to one of the vehicles are significant.

Another article requests funding for demolishing the Snell property, the house next to the post office that was used as a temporary town hall while the permanent town hall was under reconstruction.

The tuition and transportation costs for the Essex Agriculture school student are \$18,000 and \$27,100 annually, so that payment is requested in another article. (The state is expected to reimburse 91% of the transportation costs in the first year.)

The Conservation Committee submitted an article to pass a non-binding resolution on prohibiting fracked gas to pass through the town.

There is an article relating to the MS3 situation, which involves managing storm water run-off and drainage. This will be an expensive project that requires significant planning and may take several years to implement fully.

Dana reminded all of us that the next Annual Town Meeting should include an article to exclude the debt for renovations at Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical High School.

The board of selectmen are expected to meet on 9/24 to decide which articles will appear on the warrant for the Special Town Meeting. We discussed the possibility of moving the STM back a week or two in order to accommodate the public hearing, which must be held two weeks before an STM (as opposed to one week before an annual town meeting), and to give the Finance Committee time to consider all the articles.

#### GDRSD

The school district is looking for members to join two new committees – a “tri-board” and a strategic planning committee. The tri-board is comprised of town administrator/manager, Finance committee members, Selectmen and School Committee representatives from each town, as well as the Superintendent and Business Manager. This board’s goal is to review the budget – allocations and expenditures – on a quarterly basis, beginning on 9/24. Ron Mikol will go on behalf of Dunstable’s FinCom.

The Strategic Planning committee is comprised of just seven members, including one parent, community member and town official from Groton and Dunstable, as well as the superintendent. This committee will consider developing a master plan for the school district and will hold its first meeting on 9/22.

#### Negotiations

Police union negotiations have been completed, signed and approved. It is a three-year contract with a market adjustment in wages of 4% the first year and 2% each of the following years. This adjustment applies only to the patrolmen, not the chief or lieutenant.

The school contract negotiations are ongoing. Kevin was appointed by the Board of Selectmen to represent Dunstable in these negotiations.

#### New Business

There is no new business to discuss, outside of what was already covered. We will meet again on September 15 to review a draft of the special town meeting warrant.

We adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Handwritten signatures of five individuals:

- Ron J. Mikol
- Kevin Welch
- Harold K. Senior
- Dana J. [unclear]
- Christine [unclear]