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Advisory Board
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April 27, 2015

Present: Harold Simmons, Ron Mikol, Kevin Welch, Dana Metzler, Christine Muir, Pamela Crocker
Also attending: Madonna McKenzie, Ken Leva

FY16 Budget Review

The board removed \$2500 from the Fire Department budget for the cleaning and painting of the garage ceiling.

Ron noted, on the record, that the proposed Town Administrators salary is well above what the data from Mass Municipal Association indicates for a Town the size of Dunstable. The further discussion from the Town Administrator was to identify that the requested salary is driven from the need to compete for a person within our geographical area and this commands the higher salary.

Transfers

The Board unanimously approved a transfer of \$423 to the Vehicle Insurance line item, to cover additional insurance on the Fire Chief's new vehicle and a Highway Dept trailer for carrying signs. (The trailer was purchased through a grant.)

Town Meeting Warrant Review

The Board reviewed articles which had not been voted on last week: 21, 27, 28 & 31. Article 21 moves to accept Skytop Lane as a town road. Although this road was created more than a decade ago, the town has not formally adopted it yet. Town Counsel does not see any opportunity for litigation or dispute over this adoption, so the board unanimously voted to support this article.

Articles 27 and 28 concern the zoning around accessory apartments, and removing the requirement that a relative of the homeowner occupy the apartment (or the home, if the owner wants to use the apartment). Upon selling the property, the new homeowner would have to apply for a permit to use the apartment as an accessory dwelling. The board decided to Take No Position because we want to allow Town Meeting attendees to debate both sides of the issue without influence.

Article 31 reduces the acreage required for installing ground-mounted photovoltaic solar panels from 22 to 2. The board unanimously voted not to support this article as written.

Article 13 was also discussed. This article provides for the debt exclusion of \$3.5 million to upgrade the Water Department infrastructure. The board was concerned at the lack of mention of betterment fees in the article, as that could make quite a difference in the financial impact of this article. Madonna noted that Town Counsel said there are limits in wording the motion because it is a Prop 2 ½ override. The board voted unanimously not to support this article.

We adjourned our regular meeting at 8 p.m. and opened the public hearing.

Public Hearing

Several community members attended the public hearing, including Town Clerk Carol Skerrett, Treasurer Bonnie Ricardelli, Joe Dean, Selectman Ken Leva, Moderator Bob Nelson and Joan Simmons. Dana presented a brief overview of the budget, noting that it was balanced with the use of \$200,000 from free cash. Dana also noted that the three school budgets – GDRSD, Greater Lowell and Essex Aggie – were fully funded. Most of the town departments were also fully funded; although some requests were reduced, they were mostly with agreement from the departments. There were no questions from the public regarding the budget.

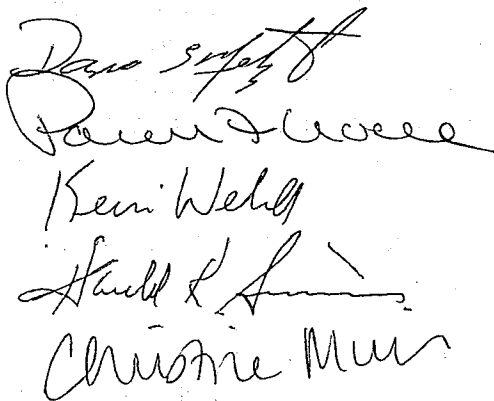
Dana then reviewed the Advisory Board's position on the warrant articles. When he mentioned not supporting the Water Department's request for infrastructure money, Joe Dean asked if there were alternative proposals or any cost-benefit analysis documents provided. Dana answered that he thought those had already be considered by the Water Board and incorporated into current proposal as needed.

When Dana said the board had voted to not support the reduction in acreage for photovoltaic panels, Joan Simmons asked why we had reached that decision. We reviewed some of our previous discussions and agreed with Selectman Ken Leva when he mentioned that the motion might be modified on town floor to a higher number, perhaps 7 or 8. Sue Psaledakis asked if the allowance could be limited to commercial or publicly-owned properties, rather than residential. It's possible.

Carol Skerrett asked why the board is not supporting the anti-littering bylaw change, increasing the fine for putting snow on a public way from \$25 to \$100. She said the \$25 doesn't cover the cost of an officer having to go to court. This has only happened once, so the Board saw no reason to change its decision on this article.

The Public Hearing adjourned at 8:25 p.m. and we resumed our board meeting, only to discuss whether any additional meetings are needed before Town Meeting. Dana agreed to post meetings for Monday May 4 at 7 and Monday May 11 at 6 p.m.

We adjourned for the night at 8:35 p.m.


Dana Skerrett
Ken Leva
Harold L. Simmons
Christie Murr