

TOWN OF HARVARD

Finance Committee

Minutes

Meeting Date: September 14th, 2011

Meeting Place: Town Hall

Members Present: Bob Thurston (chair), Steve Colwell, Marie Fagan, George McKenna, Rudy Minar, Laura Vilain (associate), Alice von Loesecke

Others Present: Tim Bragan (Town Administrator)

Meeting Time: 7:08 pm Adjournment Time: 8:45 pm

Discussion and Actions

- Bob Thurston opened the meeting at 7:08 pm
- No minutes to review.
- No public comment

- Voting in New Officers & Liaison Assignments:
 - Nominees for Chair were Marie Fagan and George McKenna
 - For Marie were Bob, Rudy; For George were Steve, Alice; with a 2:2 tie, it was decided to table the vote until next meeting
 - All further nominations for vice chair and liaison assignments were tabled until after a chair is voted in.

- Town Administer Report & Finance Director report (presented by Tim, Lorraine was not in attendance):
 - Tim presented draft of the FY2013 Budget Request Submission Process to Department Heads, Boards, Committees and Commissions from FinCom, Tim – Town Administrator, and Lorraine – Finance Director
 - Key points from letter
 - This year we're asking for a level-service budget, not a level-funded budget
 - And, asking for priority list (top three) with associated costs
 - Discussion
 - Tenor of letter has changed; we're asking to get a more complete picture of monetary needs
 - Guideline #5 asks for an impact statement using level dollar funding from FY2012 for the 2013 budget
 - Rudy asked about Guideline #4; how are analytic measurement defined? Tim: its varies per department, even per operations within a department
 - George asked about Guideline #1; if there's a retirement does the new hire really need to go back to a step 1 level? Tim; we'll add to the guidelines that "if possible" go to a step 1 level, noting that skill-sets may dictate otherwise.
 - It was generally agreed to have an inflationary increase of something instead of 0%; suggesting 1%/year.
 - Guideline #3 asks for an explanation of new sources of revenue; Bob further explained that this would include all sources for revenue, such as fees received, which will be helpful in deciding funding.
 - Board discussed the reason we got into 5-year planning was that the departments were planning year by year, assuming if something wasn't funded this year, they'll ask for it the following year. For future financial planning there needs to be better, and more analytical forward-thinking.
 - George suggested money savings, if not revenue, may be found in the school lunch program. Currently the program runs at break-even; he suggested that there could be a more detailed look at the budget for school lunches.
 - Regarding the format of the Budget Request letter, there was a discussion about including actuals or blanking them out; they will not be included. Also Rudy suggested inclusion of Totals and Cost of Labor as a percentage of the Total(s).

- Prepare for Sept. 21 all boards meeting
 - Tim will present the "state of the State." After which, department heads will present their 5-year plans in an open forum,

thus encouraging brainstorming. Each department will have the chance to talk about their programs' needs and costs, new opportunities, and possible threats. In this way, departments will find intersections, and ways to work together to cut costs. Tim reiterated, this meeting is about vision. First, have the vision, then prioritize, and finally create the 5-year strategic plans. It's similar to a SWAT meeting format. Alice suggested building into the calculator scenario 10% risk versus 80% risk – in an effort to signal when financial threat might hit, so reserves can be set aside. Ongoing maintenance will also have to be built in.

The 5-Year Strategic Plans will be included with the 5-Year Budget Forecasts. This year, departments are encouraged to submit their plans electronically. It was suggested that The Book be put online. Last year 500 copies were printed.

Tim is looking into including an e-version of The Book on the town webpage, and limiting the household mailings. TBD

Other Business

It was noted by Tim, FY2010 books aren't closed because of the untimely leaving of the treasurer. We are also waiting on the Free Cash certification.

There will be a Fees meeting in October to look at the pay-for-bag program and burning permits.

Regional Dispatch is moving forward with Devons, Lancaster, Harvard, and just recently Lunenburg signed on. Tim may need to talk with MassGov to change the IMA to 4 not 5 communities. Contact people for this project include Chief Garrity and Anne Pierce.

Tim noted that the State passed insurance reform, and that there could be additional savings for Harvard, however we have seen some of these savings by moving to a GIC plan versus a Legacy plan.

Eldridge Road Drainage is being addressed because of flooding. There have been meetings with Boxboro, Senator Kerry, and Congresswoman Tsongas. The Federal Government has determined through a study the problem is the small size of the culvert under Eldridge Road put in place when Rt. 495 was built. The dam is not the problem. This comes as a heads up from Tim; since the problem is on the Harvard line, Boxboro, who's taking the lead in this, has a quote of \$21K from the engineering firm. Harvard may be asked to fund this amount. Replacement of the culvert will most likely be paid for by State and Federal programs.

Sewer project will be started by 10/23. The Contractors have the SRF. A Friday morning meeting with the superintendent, the police chief, and others will address issues of timing.

Drainage project on Ayer Rd will alleviate black ice issues.

Calendar review and update as needed

Two more tri-boards meetings are planned after January.

FinCom will meet weekly through Jan, Feb, and March 2012, in addition Saturday meetings are planned 9-12.

Next meeting October 5, 2011

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Vilain