

# **TOWN OF HARVARD**

## **Finance Committee**

### **Minutes**

**Meeting Date:** Wednesday, March 14, 2012

**Meeting Place:** Town Hall Meeting Room

**Members Present:** Marie Fagan (chair), Bob Thurston, Steve Colwell, Heidi Frank, Alan Frazer (assoc.), George McKenna, Rudy Minar, Laura Vilain (assoc.)

**Members Not Present:** Alice von Loesecke

**Others Present:** Tim Bragan - Town Administrator, Lorraine Leonard - Finance Director; Pete Jackson (Municipal Buildings Committee - MBC), Doug Coots (MBC), Wade Holtzman (MBC)

**Meeting Time: 7:00 p.m.      Adjournment Time: 9:45 p.m.**

### **Discussion and Actions**

- Marie Fagan opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.
- Municipal Buildings Committee (MBC) presentation

Pete Jackson, (MBC), presented a bulleted list of problems with the current Town Hall including asbestos removal (approx. \$47,000), many code deficiencies and a need for accessibility, structural problems with the front end of the building (this alone costing approx. \$1.5M). In addition, the MBC team was tasked with creating more meeting space and open space. He said that if they were able to split out the cost of renovations, it may be at least \$2M, but that it was hard to separate out. Doug Coots, (MBC), suggested that all the systems that needed renovation worked interdependently, like electrical with plumbing with energy efficiency, etc. Four handouts were distributed.

The renovation for Hildreth House was discussed. The question was asked what assumptions were used for these renovations. Pete explained that he had consulted with the State about size and costs of senior centers in a towns similar to Harvard's size, and he had worked with both the current and previous COA Directors, along with the architect. The conclusion was that the plan for the Hildreth House renovation was in line with what a typical senior center would be for a town like Harvard. When questioned about future growth, Pete had worked with the current COA employees, the architect and Tim Bragan, though forecasting future growth was essentially an unknown. In looking at a 5-year planning cycle, Pete could not determine operating costs; it was not in his purview. He did say however they had designed the renovation for the next 30-50 years.

The Committee asked about trends towards needing less space in Town Hall, including moves towards regionalizing. And then again what if 5 more employees were hired, would more space be needed. The line of questioning in general pertained to what is the vision of the project. Doug Coots responded by saying that the plan for the Town Hall renovation was 'right-sized' based on cost considerations and a group effort by the Town and Town committees.

There are some questions about cost estimating, and the accuracy of cost estimations,

especially regarding Hildreth House. The MBC had worked last year with Skansa, a building contractor, who gave a lower cost estimate. They now work with Daedelus, a cost estimating company, who are giving a higher cost estimate. The true cost estimate falls somewhere in the middle. This is in part why the costs for the Hildreth House have ranged between \$2.3M and \$5.23M

When questioned about cable connections and partitions, it was explained that this would be better covered in the next stage of design development.

- Minutes for Wednesday, March 10, were reviewed, and approved with changes.

**A motion was made to accept the Minutes for March 10, 2012.**

**The vote was 6:0 in favor.**

- Public comment

\_\_\_\_\_Ames Hardymon Schnier, Old Boston Turnpike Rd, spoke about the decision to not record or broadcast the Finance Committee meeting when the budget was voted on February 25, 2012. This was her statement:

- Book Assignments due Wednesday, March 21

Finance Committee reviewed Rudy and Alan's State of the Town draft, Heidi's cover, Bob's Massachusetts DOR town comparisons chart, Marie's Finance Committee's Address, and Lorraine's reports.

- Review of 58 Warrant Articles - (as drafted by Tim Bragan)

The following is a list not necessarily in order as the article numbers will change:

*Steve Colwell rejoined meeting, after attending the Community Preservation Committee's (CPC) meeting*

1. **Annual Reports** - to see if the Town will hear the reports of various committees
2. **Re-vote** from last year's Annual Town Meeting - to fund new forest fire fighting truck for Fire Department - need re-vote because of technicality.
3. **FY11 Certified Free Cash** - transfer of \$435,754 to Capital Stabilization and Investment Fund
4. **Omnibus budget** - vote it in
5. **Reserve Fund - FY13** vote in \$350,000 needed for reserve fund transfers;
6. **Fire Dept - Fire Gear Lockers** of \$7,000
7. (skip this number)
8. **Fire Dept - Thermal Imaging Cameras** for \$12,000
9. **Fire Dept - SAFE Program**
10. **OR SAFE Program Revolving Fund** (TBD)
11. **Update of Master Plan** - transfer of \$100,000 from the Overlay Surplus to update the 2002 Master Plan
12. **Economic Development Committee-Budget**-to start this committee with \$1,000 in funds
13. **Public Buildings -Energy Audits**-to fund \$12,000 for auditing for energy efficiency
14. **Municipal Buildings-Facility Manager** - to fund \$55,630 for part-time manager

15. **Municipal Buildings Repair and Maintenance** - to fund \$40,000
16. **Capital Planning and Investment Fund-Appropriation** - of \$50,000
17. **Personal Property Exemption** - to increase personal property accounts to be taxed from \$2,500 to \$5,000
18. **Amend Town Bylaws Chapter 36. Finance Committee** - so that the Finance Committee can establish a quorum with associate members who also can vote until a full member joins the meeting

**A motion was made to recommend this article to amend Town bylaws such that associate members may be seated by the Chair or acting Chair to establish a quorum and be able to vote until a full member joins the meeting. The associates will be seated by seniority.**

**The vote was 5:1 in favor. Heidi Frank opposed.**

*Rudy Minar had to leave.*

19. **Amend Town Bylaws-Chapter 17. Capital Planning and Investment Committee; Capital Stabilization and Investment Fund** - so that the Capital Planning and Investment Committee may appoint an associate member, and that that member may be called by the Chair or acting chair to establish a quorum and vote until a full member joins the meeting
20. (skip this number)
21. **GIS** - Finance Department - Massachusetts' Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS) project to be funded for \$6,700
22. **Capital Planning and Investment Committee - CPIC Debt Payment** for (TBD)
23. **Fire Department - Replace and Relocate Town Center Air Horn** for \$23,195
24. **Fire Department - Upgrade Radio Infrastructure** for (TBD)
25. **Reconstruct and Repair Littleton County Road (from Schoolhouse Road to the Town Line)** for \$750,000 over 3 years

**A motion was made to recommend this article the sum of \$750,000 to borrow as exempt debt to repair and reconstruct Littleton County Road.** Discussion - Some on the Committee wonder if this additional cost is asking too much of the Town with the Town Hall renovation and CPIC modification of the Community Preservation Act going to 3%.

**The vote was 3:2 in favor. Marie Fagan and Steve Colwell were opposed.**

26. **Department of Public Works - Purchase New Boom Flail Mower** for \$97,895
27. (skip this number)
28. (skip this number)
29. **Water Department - Well Pump Replacement** for \$10,000
30. **School Department-School Zone Signs** for \$13,000
31. **The Bromfield School-Replace Carpeting with Vinyl Composite Tile** for \$22,500
32. **The Bromfield School-Ongoing Energy Project** for \$52,500
33. **The Bromfield School-Alarm System** for \$10,600
34. **School Department-Pond Road Parking Area** for \$75,000
35. **The Bromfield School-Tennis Court Lighting and Resurfacing** for \$10,600
36. **Board of Selectmen - Town Hall Project** for \$3,000,000 and \$1,000,000
37. **Community Preservation Committee Report**
38. **Preservation of Historic Town Documents** for \$24,000

39. **Harvard Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund** a transfer from Housing Reserves totaling \$34,395
40. **Conservation Commission-Invasive Species Control** a transfer from ( ) of \$24,000 and \$26,000
41. **Congregational Church-Restore Columns of Church Entrance** a transfer from historic reserves totaling \$2,500
42. **Cemetery Commission-Shaker Burial Ground Tree Removal** a transfer of \$11,500
43. **Community Preservation Committee-Administrative Expenses** for \$2,500
44. **Modification of CPA Surcharge & Inclusion of Exemptions** for 3%
45. (skip this number)
46. **Revolving Funds** reauthorizing accounts for CoA, 4th of July Committee, Harvard Ambulance Service, old Library
47. **Home Rule Petition-Means tested Senior Property Citizens Property Tax Exemption**
48. (skip this number)
49. **Voter Information** - to allow Town to send information on local binding and non-binding referenda question to voters before local elections.

**A motion was made to recommend against this Voter Information article because of its unknown financial impact.** Discussion: Though the Committee is generally in favor of voters being informed, there is no source of funding for this.

**The vote was 5:0 in favor of voting against.**

50. **Article 50** - allowing assessors to exempt up to 100% of real and personal property taxes for national guardsmen and reservist for years deployed and for seniors who qualify for the state circuit breaker income tax credit for their domicile.

**A motion was made to recommend against this article.** Discussion: The Town would be matching the State's current credit. Again there is no funding source, and there's a lot of uncertainty. Could this be done on the Floor at Town Meeting? Is the cost \$70,000? It was recommended that we defer this until there is more information.

**The vote was 5:0 in favor of voting against.**

51. **Article 51** - authorizes communities to establish senior work-off abatement programs, where maximum reduction on property tax is up to 125 hours of service instead of \$1,000, and a proxy can do this work.

**A motion was made to recommend this article.** Discussion: The intent is worthy. Last year the program was not fully subscribed, though each year it's different. The cap is at \$10,000. Each department head is asked what a senior might do.

**The vote was 5:0 in favor.**

52. **Article 52** - Commercial Solar Photovoltaic installation
53. **Amend the Protective Bylaw - Signs**
54. **Amend the protective Bylaw - Affordable Accessory Apartment -**  
(note section (4)(d))

\* Vote on Saturday CPIC Warrants

- Next meeting – Saturday, March 17, 2012, 8:00 a.m., Town Hall meeting room  
– Town Meeting, April 28, 2012

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Laura Vilain