

ADVISORY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Of
April 16, 2014

A meeting of the Advisory & Finance Committee was held on Wednesday, April 16, 2014. The meeting was called to order by the Chairman, John Moody at 7:00 p.m. and was conducted at the Plymouth Town Hall, Lincoln Street, Plymouth, Massachusetts.

PRESENT

Fourteen members of the Committee were present:

John Moody, Michael Hanlon, Linda Benezra, Robert Morgan, Michael Duffley, Michael Hourahan, Marc Sirrico, Nancy McSpadden, Harry Salerno, Ethan Kusman, Shelagh Joyce, Charles Stevens, Christopher Merrill and Richard Gladdys

ABSENT

One member of the Committee were absent:

Cornelius Bakker

Agenda Items

Town Meeting Review:

Chairman Moody opened the meeting with discussion on the recent Spring Town Meeting and the precinct meetings leading up to Spring Town Meeting.

Mr. Hanlon thanked the Finance Committee members for the support of attending precinct meetings.

Mr. Moody agreed with Mr. Hanlon's sentiment on precinct caucus participation.

Ms. Benezra feels presentation workshops are very well attended, however felt second workshop was perhaps too much and should be televised.

Ms. Joyce discussed that the collaborative discussion at town meeting workshops was beneficial.

Mr. Gladdys stressed the uniqueness of precinct meetings and how each precinct is different.

Mr. Salerno found precinct caucus to be interesting. Town Meeting Members questioned how the Finance Committee members voted on certain articles.

Mr. Moody stressed how the Finance Committee votes, why committee comes to a decision and how articles were debated is important to Town Meeting members.

Mr. Morgan found that caucus meetings were quick while other precinct meetings were longer with lots of discussion.

Mr. Hanlon asked how the binder/notebooks worked for members. Mr. Hanlon felt it was convenient to organize article for Spring Town Meeting.

Mr. Gladdys found that the binder/notebook was very helpful to prepare for upcoming caucus meetings.

Mr. Hanlon felt that certain changes to the published book compared to when the Finance Committee heard the articles with different language is a concern.

Ms. Benezra feels that the book was also very helpful and informative when meeting with the precinct members.

Mr. Salerno felt that the notebook was helpful to prepare before precinct caucus meetings.

Mr. Moody commented on the common theme that the notebook is beneficial before Town Meeting books are published.

Ms. Benezra asked committee members to bring white budget binders to recycle back to Town Hall for next year's budget books.

Committee Priorities:

Chairman Moody indicated that the gap between Spring Town Meeting and Spring Finance Committee meetings that we as a committee try to stress to meet every month. Perhaps the summer months may have one or two meeting session sabbatical.

Ms. Benezra stressed the importance of scheduling the June meeting later in the month for handling of year end items before July 1st which is the new fiscal year for the Town of Plymouth.

Ms. Benezra then asked about the Audit Committee Report.

Mr. Moody commented that on May 13th the Audit Committee will meet with Lynne Barrett Finance Director and the Towns independent audit firm on year end audit report for Fiscal Year 2013.

Mr. Gladdys stressed concern on receiving information on articles before Town Meeting instead of having to rush to a decision.

Ms. Joyce asked about presentations on certain follow-up questions. Ms. Joyce is concerned about how a decision is made on an article when questions are not answered in a timely manner.

Ms. McSpadden asked if articles are to be received on a certain timeline instead of having to be crammed into making a decision.

Chairman Moody stressed that the committee has deadlines although we do not have discretion to make a decision whether ~~if~~ an article can ~~not~~ be heard.

Chairman Moody continued to comment that it is not out of the ordinary for further information to come back to the Finance Committee right before Spring Town Meeting. (Ex. Old Spire Church)

The Chairman thinks it is reasonable for Finance Committee members to reconsider its recommendation on an article. Mr. Moody feels that members need to be cautious about information that is not always fully presented.

Mr. SIRRICO feels that reconsideration is reasonable and appropriate if a member makes a motion and is seconded by another member and we follow the defined process. Attendance is important for members, especially to vote on articles. Mr. SIRRICO stressed that each member has a vote.

Ms. Benezra commented that historical perspective that an article has not come up too many times in the past for reconsideration.

Mr. Gladdys, referencing the collective bargaining article, indicated that since the presenters included only the Assistant Town Manager and Selectman Provenzano that he believes it put the committee in a difficult position when the two presenters could not answer specific questions. It would have been helpful to have had the union representative to answer the Finance Committee's questions.

Mr. Stevens inquired about voting per conference call and/or proxy, requesting that the Chairman determine whether those voting options can be exercised since they are in the State of Massachusetts charter.

Chairman Moody indicated that he will investigate the issue of voting in absentee and whether this is an appropriate mechanism for the Committee to adopt.

Mr. Hanlon commented that conference calling may not make a difference if the Town Hall is moving to a new location. Perhaps the new Town Hall will have this video conferencing capability. Perhaps this technology can be explored.

Ms. Joyce asked if Mr. Brown was invited for the Article 1 presentation?

Mr. Moody stated that we do not invite presenters. The committee posts the meeting and agenda which is open for the public at large to attend.

Ms. Benezra commented that three petitioned articles were not heard on Town Meeting Floor and was concerned about why they were not heard.

Mr. Moody indicated that the Town Moderator decided to take no action due to the language in the three petitioned articles.

Ms. Benezra followed up asking for a copy of the legal opinion of why petitioned articles were not heard.

Mr. Hanlon said with identifying priorities between the two town meetings, sub-committee chair recommendations, pension/healthcare liabilities (OPEB) \$500 million liability, actuarial valuation report, and discussed on meeting with the Board of Selectmen and School Board for a joint meeting.

Mr. Hanlon asked that a pension contribution sub-committee be formed. Mr. Salerno recommended this to be created to get our arms wrapped around this plan and its fiscally prudent and to look at it outside of budget season.

At 8:07 Mr. Duffley had to excuse himself from the meeting.

Mr. Moody asked if the Pension and OPEB sub-committee would be more than three (3) members ~~due to the detailed information each liability consists of due to the financial size of this liability.~~

Mr. Moody discussed that this issue is a burden on a national scale for Cities and Towns.

Mr. Hanlon continued on with the priorities list which he stated Public Safety (Police, Fire dispatch consolidation), consolidation of fire stations, and overtime issues relating to traffic detail and other broader overtime issues.

Mr. Moody commented that the priority list is important for Finance Committee to address key issues to present to the Town Manager, Finance Director, and Department Heads.

Ms. Joyce spoke in regards to the school system and its large budget. There needs to be more discussion on the budget as it is more than fifty percent of the Town's overall budget.

Mr. Moody will look into pulling in a focus group of Finance Committee members to review our priorities and to have a school budget presentation from budget analyst for the schools, Gary Costin.

Mr. Stevens asked the Chair about negotiated contracts for the Town.

Mr. Gladdys commented that he came to Town over twenty-five years ago, indicating schools almost lost accreditation and has since improved its standards. ~~He then asked if the Finance Committee recommendations have been in favor with Town Meetings vote.~~

Ms. Benezra followed up on school presentation and the charter schools impact on the overall budget.

Mr. Salerno has asked if we have had any feedback from Town Meeting members if we are performing to meet their expectations.

Ms. Joyce stated that we have a Town Meeting representative in the room: Mr. Paul Hapgood spoke that Town Meeting was completed in one day and not in three as scheduled. Mr. Hapgood stressed that the information that the Finance Committee presented was very beneficial.

Chairman Moody moved into Meeting minutes approval section of the agenda.

Minutes:

January 29, 2014: Ms. Benezra moved to approve the minutes as provided. Mr. Hanlon, second. The motion carries unanimously.

February 5, 2014: Ms. Benezra moved to approve the minutes as provided. Mr. Hanlon, second. The motion carries unanimously.

February 12, 2014: Ms. Benezra moved to approve the minutes as provided. Mr. Hanlon, second. The motion carries unanimously.

Mr. Gladdys indicated it is difficult to review some meeting minutes due to the length of some of the meetings. Mr. Hanlon stressed it is an important mechanism to get it right with meeting minutes.

February 19, 2014: Ms. Benezra moved to postpone to May 21 meeting. Mr. Gladdys seconded the motion. The motion carries unanimously.

February 26, 2014: Ms. Benezra moved to approve the minutes as provided. Mr. Salerno, second. The motion carries unanimously.

Old/New Business:

Mr. Morgan stated he may not serve on the Finance Committee after May 10th town election as he is running unattested for School Committee.

Ms. Benezra made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Gladdys, second. The motion passed unanimously.

The Meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Merrill