

TOWN OF PRINCETON MA
Princeton Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 28, 2018

AC members in attendance: Jimmy O'Coin, John Shipman, George Handy, Judy Dino, Wayne Adams,

AC members absent: Bill Lawton, Don Schoeny

Advisory Committee (AC) Agenda

- Approve Minutes
- Update on FSC ATM Warrant Articles
- High-level approach to town budget review and AC decision process
- Discuss AC bylaws changes as proposed by one SB member
- Discuss Selectboard Fiscal Advisory Letter to Residents

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Started at 5:08 PM

Approved AC Minutes for March 14th and March 19th , 2018

The balance of the meeting was discussion per the amended agenda, with no votes.

Judy Dino provided an update on the direction the FSC is taking to draft articles for the warrant. Building repair/stabilization is one group of the articles. Options still under discussion are JWA Options A, B, C or some combination of the engineering studies being a-la-cart or combined. John Shipman read a set of minutes from a recent FSC/SB meeting and found 11 points of decisions/clarity being worked on. Until there is more clarity on what the articles may be, the AC can't take up an analysis and decision. Some discussion was had to the effect whether the FSC was artificially constraining themselves to the May ATM when certain answers are unknown risking a motion being voted down, as contrasted to convening a STM later in the year when more answers are known, options fully explored, and more town education is carried out. Several felt the JWA study is limited in scope and should have included an analysis of what the town needs to run the town, instead of starting with the assumption the current staffing levels are aligned well.

George Handy led a discussion on recommending the AC take an approach to render opinions on town budget by department and by summary, rather than on line-items in a specific department budget. The General Government Budget was used for purposes of discussion, whereby y-o-y increases are ~10% . Following the approach would be to vote it up or down, if down to assert a different percentage growth, instead of trying to recommend how the department restructure the department and staff to operate to a different amount. The overall town operating budget in draft form is >4% . AC past year guidance was to limit growth to no more than rate of inflation of 2.5% Based on past discussions, budgets growing faster than 2.5% become unsustainable over time, exhausting

tax levy capacity and result in voter overrides. Next version of the budget to be presented on 4/2 joint SB/AC meeting. SB guidance to TA was to reduce the budget growth.

John asked if there were any opinions yet for the Select Board member draft AC bylaw changes. Wayne expressed a view that the changes will not materially affect the AC work to lead the town to having sustainable budgets. Wayne expressed that the town would be better served with a Finance Committee owning all budgeting and fiscal planning taking the budget to town vote; and further expanding the SB to 5 members to shift some of their work focus to strategy, revenue, and grants with the freed-time from the operating budget formation processes.

John asked if there were any opinions on the recently posted and emailed Selectboard Fiscal Advisory to Town Residents. Some opinions shared that raising taxes would not be necessary if the operating budget was reined in and past year decisions on special articles diminished debt service levels. Until the AC receives a revised town budget and capital request plan, too early to know if the letter guidance aligns well with ATM Warrant.

AC meeting adjourned at 7:47 PM

Upcoming AC meetings

- Next AC meeting is April 2nd with SB at 7:30PM
- Upcoming SB meetings, tbd whether there will be additional budget discussions and decisions: April 17th 7:30PM
- AC public hearing for ATM Warrant, May 7th
- ATM May 15th

Handouts and Referenced Documents

- Latest version of town budget spreadsheets, from TA on 3/7/2018
- Draft AC Bylaw revision, version 3/21/2018
- SB Letter to Residents Fiscal Advisory, sent/posted by town 3/26/2018
- FSC Meeting minutes 3/20/2018

Minutes recorded by Wayne M. Adams, AC Member