

Finance Committee Minutes
December 19, 2002
Approved

In attendance are Steve Dungan, Patti Heron, David Walrath, Tom Ryan, Charlie Kern, Janet Wheeler, and Mary Kerr.

The meeting is opened at 8:42.

Kunelius Property

David Cobb and Tim Reed from the friends of Red Acre are present. The goal of this group is to preserve the Kunelius property as it is currently zoned, which is Recreation/Conservation. They would also like to preserve the water protection district that is located in the wetlands of the property. The goal of The Friends is to preserve open spaces, provide affordable housing, and keep the historic nature of Red Acre Road. The Friends would like to deed the two houses currently on the property affordable housing, and donate the barn to equine rescue. They would like to give 42 acres back to Stow and keep a dry land corridor for wildlife and land for the vernal pool also on the property. The article submitted for the special town meeting is for \$300,000 to assist in the purchase of the land, but the Friends hope to ask for less by town meeting. The Friends believe that the proposed Chapter 40B development is kid-friendly and a potential net cost to the town. The Friends believe that the one time cost of their article will save the town money. Expenses include additional kids in the schools and 60+ cars on Red Acre Road and 117. A sheet is handed out explaining preliminary costs to Stow due to the increased number of students to Nashoba and Minuteman. The sheet explains that the units built will not be revenue neutral in paying for student assessments to schools. Steve asks about access to the area. Tim responds that there is access via Tuttle Lane and an old tractor road near the northern end of the property. Tom asks if it will be viable to pursue the equine rescue facility if the article fails. Tim responds that the move is viable, and the Friends would continue to pursue it. This would have to take place in the 120-day window, which ends in February.

School Design Article

Nancy Fleming the Chair of the School Building Design Committee, and members of the Capital Planning Committee are present. Mary Kerr asks if combining two buildings into one will eliminate any positions. Nancy responds that 2/10 of a position per staff member that travels between schools will be gained. Ron Laravee, Principal of Center and Pompo, estimated a \$50,000 operational savings per year with respect to efficiency in delivery of services. Nancy states that operational savings would not be a large savings, but efficiency of services would increase. Karen Meyer asks about the process to come up with this plan of action. Nancy said that both schools were at or near capacity, and the mandate for the School Building Design Committee was to evaluate this and determine solutions. The committee received 19 responses from architectural firms and each SBDC member independently evaluated them and narrowed the field down to 3. The committee chose The Design Partnership of Cambridge, which is the same firm that dealt with the Hale renovation project. The study by the committee estimated that there would be 728

students in grades K-5. The committee also needed to consider Special Needs Pre-K students that are currently housed in Bolton. It was estimated that six classrooms would be needed for grades K-5 and one room for Pre-K students. The Design Partnership of Cambridge found that there is limited space in Pompo and Center to add on to each school. Pompo was built in the 1970's and Center in the 1950's with two additions, and many systems are original with many components that have outlived their usefulness. The committee wanted small schools, but this is hard since the town is growing. The Design Partnership of Cambridge developed one large building with two wings to give the feel of two separate schools with common core facilities. Karen Meyer asks if any less aggressive projects were considered. Nancy responds that the Compaq lands were looked at, but the committee wanted to use land already owned by the town. If this land were purchased, it would not be reimbursable. Nancy responds that at a cost of about \$10 million, the two schools could be renovated, but not expanded. This cost is just to bring the buildings up to code. This does not address the issue of the rising population, and no state assistance funds would be obtained. Karen Meyer asks what will happen if the project is pushed back, and what is the timeline for this building. Nancy responds that the SBAB reimbursement could decrease by 10% in FY'04. With the current schedule, the school will be finished in 2005. Steve responds that Bill Wrigley projected that reimbursement will not appear until 2013, and borrowing hits a peak in 2009, and the cost will add about \$800 a year to the average tax bill.

Community Preservation Committee Article (6)

Bob Wilbur and Bruce Fletcher are present from the CPC. They mention that due to the passage of the Community Preservation Acts, 30% of the total CPC funds, which is about \$545,000, must be allotted equally into Preserving Historic Resources, Open Spaces, and Housing. This article has no direct financial impact to the town.

Community Preservation Committee Affordable Housing Article (7)

Bob Wilbur and Bruce Fletcher are present from the CPC. They mention that they want a quick response and would like to form guidelines and criteria to develop a plan to make units affordable in perpetuity. This article would allot \$150,000 to affordable housing. Bob Wilbur clarifies that the article is revisited every year. Steve asks if the voters need to approve each unit. Bob responds that generic authority is given to the CPC, which needs a 2/3 vote of its voting members to determine affordability and transfer funds to the Housing Authority. Bob states that the survey of interest in a deed restriction is strong.

Research of Articles

The following groups were determined:

Patti and Charlie: SMED Article.

David and Janet: School Design Article.

Tom and Mary: Kunelius Article.

Patti moves to adjourn the meeting, David seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

The meeting is adjourned at 10:17.

Respectfully submitted by Mitchell Samson.