

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
October 14, 2003
Town Building
Approved

In attendance are Steve Dungan, Jason Robart, Pam Glauner, Patti Heron, Laura Rome, Charlie Kern, and Tom Ryan. Janet Wheeler arrives at 7:15.
The meeting is opened at 7:05.

Minutes

The 9/23 minutes are amended and tabled until a future meeting. Mitch will clarify a discussion that Tom had with Nancy Fleming.

Past Action Items

- Steve talked with Nancy Stell-Kiely from Lancaster. She asserts that the report she compiled on per-pupil spending for the NRSD is adequate as it is, and will not pursue SAT scores or rate of growth spending.
- Jason and Patti to clarify with Bill if there is any intention of correcting the NRSD minimum contribution figure.
- Mary to edit the letter to the Board of Selectmen on the Fincom consensus on how to balance the budget and other town issues.

Correspondence

- Memo from David Bunker from the House Ways and Means Committee Re: How the minimum contribution is calculated.
- Planning Board Legal Notice of a public hearing on 10/21 for a proposed change to the Zoning Bylaw.
- Planning Board Legal Notice of a public hearing on 10/24 for a proposed change to the Zoning Bylaw.
- 9/30 Memo from Minuteman VHS Re: Pothole guidelines have been established.
- 9/24 Memo from Minuteman VHS Re: Understanding distorted state minimum contributions.
- Notice of 16 member town meeting at Minuteman High School to discuss a change in calculating the assessment figures.
- 10/3 memo listing the various meetings to be held before the special town meeting.
- Memo Re: Flu shots will be given out at the Union Church on 10/24 between 10A.M. and 1 P.M.
- Memo from Minuteman VHS Re: Comparison of teacher salaries for area towns and districts.
- Memo from James Johnson from the Department of Revenue Re: The Free Cash figure for Stow has been certified at \$651,578.
- Phone Directory for all town departments.
- Various e-mail sent between Tom and Mary in the past few days.
- Memo from the Town Counsel to the Planning Board Re: Opinion on the Planning Board articles for the special town meeting.

- Notice of a S.T.O.W.S. meeting on 10/22 at 7:30 at the Town Building to prepare for the special town meeting.
- COA October newsletter.
- MMA *Beacon* Fall edition.

Discussion of Capital Requests

Karen Meyer is present. She states that the Capital Planning Committee has determined the importance of the capital articles with the most important being the fire pumper truck and the least important being the police cruiser. Karen believes that the current bucket truck is a safety hazard, and a used truck will be a minimal expense. She feels it is possible to wait until the annual town meeting to purchase the truck, but she does not believe it is right to punish those departments with long range capital replacement plans. The Capital Planning Committee did recommend approval of the police cruiser since this will keep their maintenance schedule on track. Tom asks if there is any information on future capital expenses. Karen responds that the fire department may ask for another fire truck next year. Tom asks if the Capital Planning Committee has determined a sustainable number for capital for outer years. Karen responds that the numbers recently have been skewed due to many large purchases such as the purchase of a new fire truck. Lately only departments with regular maintenance schedules have been asking for capital, while many smaller or less essential capital items have not been requested.

Discussion of the October 25th Special Town Meeting and Warrant

Article 9 Water Hole Construction and Maintenance

Patti states that the reduction of \$10,000 will not have any significant effect on home insurance. However, the rates may be affected if maintenance for these areas is cut for an extended period of time.

Article 15 Highway Barn Improvement Transfer

According to the Building Inspector, the work for the Highway Barn has been completed.

Article 16 Capital

The Highway department would rather support the purchase of the six-wheel cab and chassis highway truck since the old one is unreliable and it is used with more frequency than the bucket truck.

Liaison Reports

-Patti states that the Planning Board held a public hearing for the Bose property additions. She states that the analysis and studies were thorough and abutters were kept well informed. Patti believes that the Planning Board and Bose both seem to have the will to complete this project.

-Jason states that the NRSD School Committee has voted to reduce the FY '04 - assessments by \$400,000, which could translate to about \$140,000 to Stow. Pam asks when the funds will be available. Jason asserts that the funds will hopefully be certified before the special town meeting. Jason adds that the latest financial report indicates that 84% of the FY'04 budget is still remaining. While this may be a positive sign, it's unclear because the budget document does not show a "budget to date" column against which we could compare YTD performance.

Letter to the Board of Selectmen

Steve suggests that the town consider beginning Zero Based Budgeting so that the town and the district can collaborate when determining their budgets so that the priorities of the district and the town can be taken into account. Jason suggests that this letter be presented at the special town meeting. This letter is tabled until the next meeting.

Recommendations for the October 25th Special Town Meeting Warrant

Steve suggests that two or three people read all of the recommendations. Pam will read recommendations for articles 4-11, Janet will read recommendations for articles 12-16, and Steve will read the recommendation for article 17. Tom suggests that town meeting consider the reserve fund article at the end of the town meeting and decide on the reserve fund article contingent on which other articles pass or fail. Tom will make a presentation at the special town meeting on why the town is in the fiscal current situation. He will describe the deficit, the override vote, other major points, steps that can be taken to balance the budget, and outer year situations.

Other Business

-Steve states that he will post agendas for two meetings. The first will be on 10/21 at 7 P.M. at the Town Building, and the second will be on 10/25 at 8:30 A.M. right before the special town meeting at the Hale School gym.

-Linda Stokes believes that the verbal recommendations at the special town meeting need more information than what is written in the warrant and voters don't want the Fincom to simply read the recommendation printed in the warrant.

Project Reports

Dawes Update

-Pam is pursuing the enrollment figures for this current school year.

40b Study

Charlie states that the Master Planning Committee does not believe that a study of individual 40B's will give reliable data. Steve disagrees. He believes that studying individual 40B's in towns similar to Stow would be helpful. Charlie asks if there is a difference between a 40B and the Dawes estate. Janet responds that the Dawes property has a different demographic since Dawes has lower density homes and is not a 40B development. The number of kids per home is not necessarily the same. Janet adds that the 40B's in Stow may not follow normal school trends due to the events at the NRSD. Steve suggests that Charlie and Janet inquire with the Division of Local Services and the Association of Town Finance Committees to see if 40B studies have been done elsewhere.

Economic Development

-Patti received data on how much potential revenue there is from the build out on the Bose property. Jason suggests that this project find out how much more commercial space would be needed to make an impact on the tax revenue by 10%.

Policy on the Availability of Public Documents

Steve states that he added the stipulation to the policy that all department budgets should be submitted by March 1st. Tom moves to support the policy, Patti seconds. The motion passes unanimously.

Other Business

Linda Stokes is disconcerted that the citizen input is held after the vote has taken place. Steve states that he believes that since the meetings are not public hearings, the citizen input should be held at the end of the meeting. The consensus of the Fincom is to have all relevant discussion before the vote. If there is no vote, then the relevant discussion will take place at the end of each agenda item. All other citizen input will be done at the end of the meeting.

Action Items

- Fincom to edit and send letter to the Board of Selectmen before the 10/25 special town meeting so it can be presented then.
- Steve to talk to Bill on considering the Reserve Fund article at the end of the warrant.
- Steve to submit the Policy on the Availability of Public Documents to all town departments and to the school districts.
- Fincom to check if they have any of the verbal recommendations made for the annual town meeting. Mitch to check the past minutes for annual town meeting recommendations.

Jason moves to adjourn the meeting, Tom seconds. The motion passes unanimously. The meeting is adjourned at 9:30.
Respectfully submitted by Mitchell Samson.