

Stow Finance Committee
Public Hearing
September 27, 2005

Call to Order

Jason Robart called the open meeting to order at 7:07 pm. Present were members Pam Glauner, Charles Kern, Henry Hagopian, David Walrath, Patricia Heron and Elizabeth Tobey, Secretary.

Stephen Piotte arrived at 7:18 pm.

Also present were guests George Dargaty, Ed Newman, James Gray, Bob Wilbur, Laura Spears, Kathy Sferra, Linda Stokes and Linda Hathaway.

Review of Stow Town Meeting Warrant Articles:

Article 1 – Rescind Article 43 of 2003 Annual Town Meeting

Ed Newman questioned what the benefits are.

Dave responded that the Selectmen had informed him that having taken votes puts liability on the town and it affects the bond rating.

Article 2 – Acquisition of the Cushing Chapter 61 Land

Bob Wilbur stated that the town received the first right to refusal over the summer. The town had the property appraised (John Bolton Appraisers). The appraisal more than validated the 1.6 million. At the joint board meeting interest in the property was expressed. The Selectmen pulled together a task force. The School Building Committee initialed their consultant for the school site. The consultant for The School Building Committee did not have the expertise for the analysis. The task force concluded using a separate consultant was the way to go.

There was an opportunity to express one or more community needs,

- Affordable housing
- Open space
- Active recreation

Beals and Thomas

It was there hope to access the community needs as cost effect as possible.

- Land use plan
- Physical feasibility
- Conceptual plans (6 lots of property, to be sold off to offset the cost, several for affordable housing)
- Hire second consultant to attach market data.

Conservation Commission will cover 1/3 of cost up to \$5,000 and the Planning Board may contribute also.

The purchase of the Cushing property will meet or fulfill 1-3 community needs. The goal is to do without any need for override (to minimize the debt override as needed).

Jason questioned if when the Selectmen exercise the first right of refusal, do we now have access to the property.

Bob Wilber stated that to date there has been no formal access granted. He asked Beals and Thomas if this will hinder their work. They hinted that it will not, they will be able to produce needed reports.

Jason asked if the town is actively approaching a Purchase and Sale agreement at this time.

Bob Wilber stated that John Witten is currently actively negotiating with the owner at this time.

Kathy Sferra stated that the south west corner of Stow has tremendous number of large parcels of land. If the town purchases this land it will allow the town to build out 6 lots.

The Community Preservation Committee is very much in support of the purchase of the Cushing property.

Ed Newman asked if it passes the two tests how much time do you have to get the money.

Bob Wilber answered that the contract as currently written are that upon exercising of the purchase we would be required to reimburse developers or the owner the \$55,000. The second payment is due January 2006 and the bulk is due May 2007.

Ed commented that the position in the order is important for timing.

Pam stated that it is currently number 8.

George Dargaty questioned whether the plans are going to provide and alternate ingress/egress to the property. Walcott is a very narrow street.

Bob Wilber stated that the access will be on Walcott Street. There will be between 10 to 15 houses built, maybe more.

Article 3 – Employee Salary Changes

Henry stated that there was a group put together consisting of himself, Ross Perry, Jim Sauta, Bill Wrigley and Linda Hathaway. The job of the group was to compare salaries of 8 local towns to Stow salaries. Employees filled out a form describing their position and responsibilities in the Town. There were 27 positions being paid below the average. Creating an annual value of \$95,000.00. The group has recommended the raises be in effect the beginning of FY06.

Ed Newman asked what is the percentage of the average increase

Henry stated it is between \$2,200 to \$3,000 on average.

Jason stated that it is a \$2,500 gross average.

George Dargaty asked how many positions are higher then the average.

Henry stated that 5 positions are 10% over the average.

Article 4 – Fuel Oil and Gasoline Supplements

Ed Newman asked if the original funds will be used first. How will it be delegated? Also who will manage the funds?

Jason stated that the purpose is to offset the increase in fuel cost over the last month or so. The funds are for the purpose of supplementing when needed.

Dave stated that he agreed that it should state who will manage the funds.

Article 5 – Road Construction

James Gray questioned if the state usually reimburses for the improvements.

Charles Kern stated that typically the state reimburses after the monies have been spent.

Article 6 – Well Repair at Town Center

Pam Glauner stated that the well services the Fire Department, Town Hall, Town Building, Library and a Church.

Ed Newman questioned if the work had already been done and if the money was already spent for FY06.

Jason stated that yes the work was already done.

Article 7 – Purchase of a Council on Aging Van

Ed Newman questioned if it will require Capitol Committee. Have we purchased the van already? Is the trade in value on the old van worth looking into to offset the money needed?

George Dargaty stated that they would be lucky to get \$100.00 for the old van because it is in such bad shape.

Jason stated that the funds are supplemented by the Commonwealth; they will pay for 80% of the van.

There was a discussion between Jason and David regarding the wording of the Article. They both feel that the language “to be paid to the Commonwealth” should read “to reimburse the Commonwealth”.

Article 8 – Purchase of Police Department Telephone Equipment

Jason stated that this was something the Police Department was considering in May.

James Gray questioned what the purpose of the phone system is. Is it enhanced 911?

Patti commented that it may be to connect the Police Department to the Fire Department.

Ed Newman questioned if they had looked at outside funds and grants

Patti replied that for \$5,000 it is probably already offset by other funding.

Article 9 – Charter Amendment, Submission of Budget and Budget Message

Jason stated that there is inappropriate language in the bylaws. 180 days prior to meeting bylaws, replace with 100 days as apposed to 180 days.

Article 10 – General Bylaw Amendment, Wetland Protection

Kathy Sferra stated that this is an old bylaw. They are going to remove the definition of normal maintenance of land and acceptable use.

Pam questioned if the old language is subsequently different than the new.

Kathy Sferra stated that it is no more or less restrictive just that it is different language.

Article 11 – Zoning Bylaw Amendment, Table of Dimensional Requirements

It was stated that this Article corrects the foot notes.

Article 12 - Zoning Bylaw Amendment, Definition of Open Space

There were no questions or comments on this Article.

Article 13 - Zoning Bylaw Amendment, Common Driveways

The Finance Committee agreed that this Article should be promoted rather than discouraged.

Article 14 – Zoning Bylaw Amendment, Inclusion of Affordable Housing

Patricia Heron stated that the Planning Board has sent a supplement of changes. She read from the summary. (See attached).

Article 15 - Zoning Bylaw Amendment, Inclusion of Affordable Housing

Ed Newman stated that if Article 14 is passed the same thing will happen on Article 15. If Article 14 does not pass then Article 15 will stay the same.

Article 16 – Zoning Bylaw Amendment, Accessory Apartments

Laura Spear stated that the Article deletes the current language that “All stairways to accessory apartments are to be enclosed.

Article 17 - Zoning Bylaw Amendment, Swimming Pools Fencing

Laura Spear stated that the current version is adequate – need not to be part of the bylaw.

There was a discussion concerning kiddy pools.

Linda stokes questioned whether the bylaws pertain to kiddy pools also.

Laura Spears said no, that the 4 foot restriction is in the state restrictions.

Article 18 - Zoning Bylaw Amendment, Dimensional Regulations

Jason stated that this Article is covering an oversight in the language. They are just cleaning up the language.

Article 19 - Zoning Bylaw Amendment, Definitions

Laura Spear stated that the definitions are being defined. Multi = More than 2 family unit is changing to Multi = More than 1 family unit.

Jason questioned that right now a 2 family unit is not considered a multi-family unit.

Article 20 – Town Election

Jason stated that the goal is to have no debt exclusion funding as part of Cushing property.

James gray asked if it would specify the amount of the bond.

Patti stated that it will not.

Linda Hathaway stated that the override is always vague. The vote at the Town Meeting will have a number. The election cannot be cancelled.

Comments and questions:

Jason asked for comments or questions and there were none.

A motion to adjourn was made by Patricia Heron and seconded by Charles Kern at 8:11 pm.

The motion carried unanimously

Respectfully submitted

Elizabeth A. Tobey
Secretary