

Minutes
STOW FINANCE COMMITTEE
April 5, 2007
Public Hearing
Town Hall

Call to Order

Charles Kern called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Present were, Pamela Glauner, David Walrath, James Salvie, Henry Hagopian, Gary Bernklow, Joseph Hogan and Elizabeth Tobey, Secretary.

Charlie Kern began the Public Hearing by thanking everyone that attended and making the introduction of the Finance Committee members.

He explained the Fact Sheet handout and the Warrant (draft) handout

Article 4 – Wage and Salary Schedules

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 5 – General Budget for Fiscal Year 2008

Dave Walrath explained the major changes in the Budget for FY08.

Growth items included:

- Police Department up 5.1%, mainly due to officer out on injury.
- COA - Growth is due to the proposing of expanding the number of hours the bus will be running which creates a need for a new employee.
- Group Insurance up 8%

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 6 to 34

Charlie Kern asked for comments.

Ed Newman asked the committee to comment on the two different legal articles, 28 and 29.

Article 28 – Legal Services – Transfer from overlay surplus account

Dave Walrath stated that if the funds are transferred from existing funds which would make them immediate funds. They are funds that are available this year to pay for existing invoices rather than waiting until FY08.

Article 29 – Legal Services – General

The funds for this article are new funds and would have to wait to FY08 to be used.

Article 23 – Medical Reserve Corps Expenses

Tom Ryan asked if someone could explain what the expenses are for.

Carol Makary stated that the selectmen's understanding is that they need some office supplies, a laptop and various other items for the coming years.

John Sangermano explained that the money may be used for training, hardware, operating expenses, postage and basic operational expenses.

Article 27 – Purchase of Information Technology Equipment

Ed Newman asked that the committee explained the increase and what equipment would be purchased and how it would be deployed within the town.

Dave Walrath explained that there is a need to replace the older machines due to obsolete software and equipment. Six or seven computers will be replaced per year. The ITAC committee has also taken on other department software purchase and license renewal fees.

Article 16 – Town Common Sign Maintenance

Ed Newman asked what sign they are talking about and what is going to be done with it.

Charlie Kern stated that it is the one at the Common by the Public Library.

Jim Salvie stated that the structure of the sign is worn and leaking and in need of repairs. Over the years letters have been lost and broken and need to be replaced.

Article 33 – Community Preservation Committee Expenses

Tom Ryan asked “What are the expenses and what are they going to be spending them on?”

Bob Wilbur explained that it is for Administrative costs, due diligence for appraisals, title searches, survey printing, engineering. The money is for projects in the future. They don’t know what they are yet. The largest are appraisal services, administrative services and legal fees. Any money remaining goes back into the fund at the end of the year.

Recreation Budget- John Sangermano explained that the amount was originally \$4,200, was reduced to \$3,000 and is now \$1,200. Expenses were flat for 4 years, wages have gone up. Booklets have increased. They have had real expenses that are increasing in a flat budget.

Article 35 – Capital Requests

Dave Walrath explained that the Capital Committee is working with the school to identify an annual capital program to smooth out the burden.

Cemetery - Ed Newman asked if someone could explain what well is for at the Cemetery.

Carol Makary explained that the grass areas are unreachable by the current well and they are in need for a new well near the areas that are unreachable.

Schools repairs - Carol Makary stated that under the Schools request on Capital Planning, Bill Sprat has created a 5 year plan forecast for each of the buildings we are responsible for.

With regards to the Center School repairs, the decision was made to go ahead and proceed with moving action on those articles, however making them contingent on the outcome of the SBTf option. If neither of the SBTf options to succeed, then an affirmative vote on those capital items would allow the school district to continue to maintain the buildings until a long term decision was reached by the town.

Third Floor Restroom – Tom Ryan asked if we really need a 3rd floor restroom. Are we in compliance with the building codes now?

Charlie Kern stated that we are not in compliance now.

Bill Marr asked what we are getting for that price.

Carol Makary stated that it is a unisex fully handicapped restroom.

Eleanor Recko asked what will happen if we do not bring the 3rd floor up to code. Why are we keeping the Town Building up to code when we don’t keep our schools up to code?

David Walrath asked where are the schools out of code.

Eleanor Recko suggested that the sprinklers are out of code.

Tom Ryan stated that they are not out of compliance. They are out of compliance with new school building requirements. They are not non compliant with the code as they are currently being used.

School Security Systems - Tom Ryan asked how much safer are the security systems going to make the buildings.

Pam Glauner stated that the security systems will be usable if the new schools are built. There will be installation and wiring charges that will need to be repeated but the hardware of the system is transferable and installable in the new building.

As far as safety, everyone will have to decide for themselves.

Carol Makary stated that the card access will help control who has access to the facilities and when they have access.

Article 36 – School building – one site solution: Addition/Reno to Center School and

Article 37 – School building – two site solution: Addition/Reno to Center School and Pompo Schools
There were concerns expressed by Kathleen Farrell regarding the letter by Katherine Cravin in the Beacon Villager.

Gary Bernklow stated that the letter had been sent out to a variety of towns that are ahead of the game. The SBTF is discussing the SOI (statement of interest) tonight. Once it is submitted we are in compliance with MSBA requirements. There are a limited amount of funds every year. We can only make ourselves available to receive the funds. As soon as we get the SOI we will be in alignment with the MSBA. They won't favor you if you go ahead, but they will not penalize us either.

Steve Dungan asked if the \$30 million would start the work.

Gary explained that the design would start now and the construction would not start until the summer of 2008.

Charlie Kern explained that the tax affect on \$30 mil for 20 years will approx \$917.

Joe Hogan suggested that it is better to do it now then to wait a year and suffer the inflationary increase.

Article 38 – Land Purchase – Snow Property

Charlie Kern explained that the town is being asked to borrow 1.6 mil to buy the Snow Property on Old Bolton Rd. The median affect is \$47 per year. There is no specified use for the property at this time.

Kathleen Farrell asked what the appraised value of the property is.

Steve Dungan explained that the property was appraised at \$760 k predicated on 3 home lots on the property. The owner wants 1.6 mil, with 6 homes on the site.

Article 39 – Development of town recreational facilities

Article 40 – Creation of recreational field

Tom Ruggerio asked if the field would be rented out.

Tim Allaire stated that there will be a master plan to set up a maintenance plan and to determine the needs and uses. This would include user groups and recreation groups. They are compiling a total needs analysis. It will state what the optimal use of the fields would be with all the groups we have.

Steve Dungan stated that Article 40 has no language of what the appropriation is to be used for.

Bob Wilbur suggested that they are out of sequence. They are aware of the additional field needs. CPC endorses the need for fields. CPC can revisit the vote after the Master Plan.

Kathleen Farrell stated that the rush to judgment has concerned her. She doesn't feel true diligence has been done. How do they determine the needs and how do they define the needs.

She also stated that she is concerned regarding the proposed site at Pine Bluffs due to the human activity, ecologically, the traffic and the public safety.

Dick Gray stated that he is concerned by the health of the Lake Boon area, the septic systems and also removing trees and other unwanted weed growth.

John Sangermano noted

- Pine Bluffs will not be a megaplex
- Plan to take into account the impact to the lake
- Recreation Department has made steps to do changes to how they do maintenance and how they take care of the fields.

Anne VanTine asked if they currently rent out the fields and if so should we stop this and rest them instead of renting them.

John Sangermano stated that currently,

- Memorial Field is currently rented by a Men's Softball League that is not a Stow only league.
- Pine Bluffs is currently rented by a competitive soccer league with 2 teams from other towns.
- The maintenance is being dealt with in the Master Plan.

Article 41 – Town Hall Fire Alarm System

Article 42 – Town Hall Sprinkler System

Bob Wilbur stated that the two articles are to install a new sprinkler and fire alarm system that will be historically designed. The design will be have historical integrity. The fire department will be able to tap into the water tank for fire fighting.

Article 43 – Lake Boon Restoration

It was stated that one third of the cost for this article is paid by Hudson.

Article 44 – Restoration of Stone Walls at Lower Village Cemetery

Charlie asked for comments. None were made.

Article 45 – Purchase of Public Emergency Notification System

Charlie asked for comments. None were made.

Article 46 – Selectmen Engineering/Consultant Expenses

Charlie asked for comments. None were made.

Article 47 – Acceptance of Kingland Road Land for Recreational Use

Henry Hagopian stated there is a problem with the Wildlife Woods Homeowners Association. The developer was asked to donate common land.

Steve Dungan asked if there is a document that states the owner will donate the land. The intent is to talk the necessary steps to have it valid.

Henry stated that the developer had not approached the homeowners in the development about this.

Article 48 – Transfer of West Acton Rd Land to Conservation Commission

Charlie asked for comments. None were made.

Article 49 – Senior Tax Relief

Ed Newman stated that this Article is to accept a new Massachusetts General Law

Article 50 – Voting Eligibility for Adjudicatory Hearings

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 51 – Street Acceptance – Trefry Lane

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 52 – Street Acceptance – Cranberry Circle

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 53 – Street Acceptance – Fairway Drive and Supporting Easements

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 54 – Street Acceptance – Blueberry Court and a Portion of Woodland Way

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 55 – General Bylaw Amendment – Community Preservation Membership

Dave Walrath commented that the current bylaw states the Selectmen will pick a replacement. That contradicts the Town Charter.

Article 56 – General Bylaw Amendment – Personnel Administration Grievance Procedure

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 57 – General Bylaw Amendment – Police Regulations

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 58 – General Bylaw Amendment – Fire Prevention and Protection Code

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 59 – Zoning Bylaw Amendment – Definitions

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 60 – Zoning Bylaw Amendment – Assisted Living Residence

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 61 – Zoning Bylaw Amendment – Bed and Breakfast Establishment

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 62 – Zoning Bylaw Amendment – Overlay Districts

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 63 – Zoning Bylaw Amendment – Use Regulations

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 64 – Zoning Bylaw Amendment – Signs

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 65 – Zoning Bylaw Amendment – Lighting

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 66 – Transfer to Stabilization Fund – General

Charlie Kern asked for comments. None were made.

Article 67 – Transfer to Stabilization Fund – Clean up of Carryover Articles

Dave Walrath stated that the current level of stored assets is below 5% of the operating budget. Unspent funds have been rounded up to transfer to stabilization funds.

Article 68 – Balance the Fiscal Year 2008 Budget

Ed Newman questioned FinCom if they plan to use unforeseen funds to balance the budget.

Dave Walrath responded they plan to use \$200K in free cash.

Article 69 – Town Election

Adjournment

Public Hearing closed at 9:24 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth A. Tobey,
Secretary