

Sturbridge Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 7, 2011
Town Hall
7:00 pm

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm at the Burgess School Cmte public hearing at Burgess Elementary School cafeteria with the following members present: Kevin Smith (KS), Mary Redetzke (MR), Arnold Wilson (AW), Prescott (Scott) Arndt (SA), Patricia Affenito (PA), Larry Morrison (LM) and Mike Serio (MS).

Members Absent: Richard Volpe (RV) and Robert Williams (RW).

KS questioned several line items in the Burgess Elementary School budget for FY12. Explanations were given and the Burgess School cmte approved a budget of \$8,800,624.

ATM Warrant Articles (version 4-5-11):

Article 33-Gen. Bylaw Amendment-Finance Cmte Membership: motion made to remove the article by AW; seconded by MR.

General discussion on the existing motion: MS says that we can serve but not vote. SA makes the point that to serve a 'checks and balances' function in town government we must stand alone. PA says that typically Fin. Comm. members will abstain from votes in Finance cmte. Meetings, if they are voting members of another board/commission. LM states this will open the door to stalemates; KS makes the point that information shared can sway votes in either meeting. MS serves on the personnel cmte. and is a voting member of both boards (Fin. Comm. and Personnel). PA asks what cmtes. have a Fin. Comm. member: town hall bldg., capital, center school bldg. LM says this is a charter issue; AW disagrees saying it is a bylaw issue. AW goes on to suggest removing the article because no acceptable resolution will be crafted at the ATM. AW sees no problem with serving and voting on both boards since Fin. Comm. can vote down a request and he believes it improves communication and information transfer between boards. PA agrees with AW. SA says we are violating the bylaw by serving on another board. PA suggests changing language to 'paid special employees'. LM asks if the word 'paid' changes the state law? MS asks about not being the deciding vote; LM says how do we know who decides? MS makes the point that it is important to speak to an issue if you have experience, even though you may not vote that issue. KS makes the point that having no vote may be a disincentive to be present at the meetings of the other board. MR makes the point that the appointment to another board by the BOS gives the Fin. Comm. member essentially two votes on an issue. LM asks if Fin. Comm. should have a voting seat on the Charter Review cmte.? KS says yes, as long as the vote is in the best interest of the town. MS asks 'wouldn't you recuse yourself in Fin. Comm.

matters? PA says that most committees do not affect the Fin. Comm. directly but that the Charter Review cmte. does. LM asks if being on the BOS and Fin. Comm. is the same or different? LM goes on to say that this cmte. has been tiptoeing around legality because we have been relying on the current bylaw. KS agrees saying that the cmte. has exhibited 'willful blindness'. PA thinks the voting is debatable BUT there is conflict since Fin. Comm. members are special town employees. MS makes the point that as a parent with children in the local schools, he has a conflict with potential issues. KS makes the point that Fin. Comm. members have value on other committees, but perhaps not the other way around.

KS asks for the vote on removal of Article 33. Vote 3-3-1.

More discussion on Article 33: AW suggests a language change to 'appointed officer or compensated town employee'. LM suggests removing the BOS. KS says BOS requests that a member serve but does not request a specific member.

KS calls for a new motion on Article 33: LM makes a motion to amend the article to remove 'or the Board of Selectmen', but to retain the rest of the article as written, seconded by SA.

General discussion on the existing motion: LM says the Fin. Comm. is not at arm's length any longer.

KS asks for the vote on this motion. Vote 2-5-0.

More open discussion: MS makes the point that all matters are financial; if member of Congress can serve on multiple committees, then why not the Fin. Comm. also?

KS makes a motion to reconsider the last motion (removing 'the BOS'), seconded by LM. KS says we are the checks and balances to the rest of the town; we are apolitical. KS goes on to say that by removing the BOS, the Fin. Comm. can be made to appear as though transparency and impartiality is not important. LM makes the point that with regards to some things, you can never go too far in making sure you are above reproach.

KS calls for the vote. Vote 5-2-0.

KS makes a motion to approve Article 33 as amended, seconded by LM. Vote 3-4-0.

MS makes a motion to approve Article 33 as written, seconded by PA.

General discussion on the existing motion: LM makes the point that a member of the Parks and Rec. cmte. may be appointed to the Fin. Comm. but then will have to resign as a member of the Parks and Rec. cmte. However, that same person may be on the Fin. Comm. first and then be appointed to the Parks and Rec. cmte. SA

makes the point that if this article is voted down at ATM, the Fin. Comm. members will have to resign.

The language stands as “No member of the Finance Committee shall serve simultaneously as an elected or appointed member of any other Town body, except as voted by the BOS or mandated by the state or federal government. Finance Committee members may serve as non-voting advisors, liaison, or ex officio on other Town bodies. No such Town employee or special employee may serve on the Finance Committee during the term of such employment.”

MS makes a motion to approve with amendment, seconded by PA. Vote 2-5-0.

KS makes the statement that if language cannot be compromised/reconciled—we will vote to remove.

Line Item Budget:

Education (pg. 8):

Motion made to approve line item 93 with the change from \$8,802,256 to \$8,800,624 by AW, seconded by LM. Vote 4-3-0.

Motion made to approve line item 94 for \$5,497,882 made by AW, seconded by LM. Vote 5-1-1.

Motion made to approve line item 95 for \$170,563 made by AW, seconded by LM. Vote 5-2-0.

Motion made to approve line item 96 for \$0 made by AW, seconded by LM. Vote 7-0-0.

Motion made to approve line item 97 for \$5,990,563 made by AW, seconded by LM. Vote 7-0-0.

ATM Warrant (version 4-5-11):

Article 8-CP-Memorial Conference Rooms (pg. 5 of 36):

Discussion opens: KS says these rooms are small; he would feel better cutting betterment funds rather than CPC funds. MS feels this is not double-dipping since the funds come from two different pots. AW will get more information, but he is OK with the \$3,050 from CPC. Decision to hold this article pending further information.

Article 10-Water Dept. (pg. 6 of 36): motion to approve as written made by AW, seconded by KS. Vote 7-0-0.

Article 11-Sewer Dept. (pg. 7 of 36): motion to approve as written made by AW, seconded by KS. Vote 7-0-0.

Motion to adjourn made by KS made at 10:05 pm. Vote 7-0-0.