

Upton Fincom Minutes Revised
April 20, 2011 at Upton Fire Station

Members present-six
Joan Shanahan, Chair
Steve Bern (SB)
John Calianos (JC)
Paul Flaherty (PF)
Karen Glowacki (KG)
Jennifer Malin (JM)
Herman Meisner (HM)

Members Absent-one
John O'Sullivan (JO)

Chairman, Joan Shanahan, called the meeting to order at 7:20 PM.

A motion made by PF to adjourn the meeting of April 6 was unanimously accepted. The minutes for April 6 were, unanimously accepted, as written, upon a motion by PF. The April 13 minutes were, unanimously accepted, as corrected, upon a motion by PF and a second by KG.

There was a discussion about printing the Fincom recommendations, regarding articles for the upcoming Special and Annual Town Meetings, in preparation for the hearing on April 27. SB will send the information tomorrow morning and JC will prepare the preamble. There should be something in the preamble to indicate that the Fincom has not finished their recommendations pending the outcome of the vote in Mendon regarding the school budget. SB will take the document to the printer and arrange to pick it up. Twenty-five will be printed for the hearing and another five hundred will be printed for the election.

There was a review of the following documents:

The Finance Committee FY12 Budget Recommendations, Wage/Salary Details-Attachment 1

The Finance Committee FY12 Budget Recommendations, Articles-Attachment 2

The Special Town Meeting May 5, 2011 Warrant, Final-Attachment 3

The Annual Town Meeting May 5, 2011 Warrant, Version 4.0-Attachment 4

There was a discussion concerning Wages in Article 3. The committee has made their opinions known. Last year the committee did weigh in with their opinions on Wages. There was recognition that wages are the responsibility of the Personnel Board and the Board of Selectmen and it may not be appropriate for the Fincom to make a recommendation. That should not stop individuals of the Committee from expressing their personal opinions during the Town Meeting. We could mention it in the written document that we do not rubber stamp the decisions of the Selectmen regarding wages, and that we have made suggestions, that this may not be the time for wage increases.

The committee needs to let the voters know their thoughts about the budget as it relates to the decisions that will be made about the school budget. Both of these issues can be addressed in the written preamble.

There was a discussion about Article 27 on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. The total is a request for \$75,000 to do the schematic design documents to renovate and preserve the Town Hall. This number was reduced, because Mass Historic has advised the Town Hall Committee that they will accept less detail in the design, which will reduce the work required for the design. Some Fincom members felt that it would not be cost effective to proceed while another member expressed that the Town Hall is the architectural and traditional center of the town, and should be preserved. Although members expressed concerns about this project, a decision was made to defer a vote on the recommendation until the Capital Budget Committee discusses it and advises what their position is. They are not meeting until April 28, which is after our hearing. The Fincom will have to meet prior to the Special Town Meeting to vote on their recommendation. The Committee will meet Thursday, May 5, 2011 at 6:15 at Nipmuc Regional High School prior to the Annual Town Meeting. JS will post the meeting.

Article 40, on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant, for new polling booths was discussed. Upton is going to be required to form a second precinct and the town clerk will have to set up two distinct areas in the hall. The question was raised as to why the present booths could not be divided between the two areas. Apparently, some of the booths are in poor condition and need to be replaced. **There was a motion by PF, with a second by HM to recommend favorable action on article 40, to raise and appropriate \$3000 for the voting booth units. The motion received unanimous support.**

There was a discussion about Article 9 on the Special Town Meeting warrant relative to the request by the Historical Commission to transfer \$24,500.00 from the Community Preservations Funds to fund work at the new Heritage Park at 18 Elm St. The Mass Historic Commission recommends an archaeological assessment of the chamber prior to restoring the stones to their original positions. Doing this will avoid further damage to the structure and prevent possible injury to park users. Both the Commission and the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) have been invited twice to come to a meeting of this Committee and have not done so. There is a possibility that this article will be passed over pending another hearing by the CPC. Although some members had expressed support for this project at a previous meeting, it was acknowledged that during the process of purchasing the park, members of the Historical Commission had publicly expressed that they would not return to the towns for additional funding. They said they would look for private donations and grants to complete the project. One Fincom member felt that the statement about not returning to the town for funding was something we could not hold them to, and that there was no legal requirement that made that statement binding. He also indicated that an archaeologist had pointed out the importance of the chamber. It was also acknowledged that the Fincom members understood that members of the Historic Commission have done a great deal of work at the park and have not used any town funds for anything beyond the purchase. The building on the property was burned during training exercises by the Upton Fire Department, assisted by other towns.

After the house was burned, Davidson Construction filled in the hole and graded the site. That work was paid for by a private donation. **With a lack of more information, and a presentation from the Historical Commission, a motion was made by JC, with a second by PF to give an unfavorable recommendation on Article 9. The motion carried by a majority, with one abstention.**

There was further discussion of Article 3 on the Annual Town Meeting concerning wages and a new DPW Director. The question was asked how the Personnel Board could justify that position while still having a consultant on the payroll. The Highway supervisor and the Water/Sewer supervisor both received wage increases because of the additional work they were required to do without a DPW Director. If a DPW Director is hired, will their wages be reduced accordingly? We should make a general statement about a hiring freeze and zero raises.

There was continued discussion on the school budget. Should we support the full amount requested?

A motion was made by JC, with a second by PF, to support \$16,542,502 for the operating budget, which would mean that we are giving favorable action to everything listed. The vote to support the motion was unanimous.

Finance Committee FY12 Budget Recommendation Summary-Attachment 5

We need to indicate in the preamble to our recommendations that the town cannot sustain the budget in the future without a major override. We will also need to print an addendum for the continued Annual Town Meeting in June. That will include any information that is revised when the numbers are known for the school budget, and will include recommendations on the articles being delayed to June.

It was noted that the Local Community Housing Partnership Committee has a line item that will allow them a budget for printing and other expenses.

The Capital Budget Committee will have to print their recommendations. Chairman Shanahan indicated that the Fincom budget could cover that cost. That document should go in the back of the document printed by the Fincom, but the Capital Budget Committee is not ready yet and does not have a meeting until the 28th. This year their recommendations will be a separate handout. PF asked if a pie chart could be added to the Fincom recommendations that would show the percentages of the major expenditures. All agreed that was a good idea. The categories will be Public Safety, DPW, Debt, Education and Other General Budget. JC will draft the preamble and send it to everyone for review and comment.

A motion was made by PF, with a second by JC, to adjourn at 8:45.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Arnold

Attachments:

1. The Finance Committee FY12 Budget Recommendations, Wage/Salary Details-
2. The Finance Committee FY12 Budget Recommendations, Articles
3. The Special Town Meeting May 5, 2011 Warrant, Final
4. The Annual Town Meeting May 5, 2011 Warrant, Version 4.0
5. Finance Committee FY12 Budget Recommendation Summary
6. Preamble to the Upton Finance Committee FY12 Budget Recommendations