

Upton Finance Committee (Fincom) Minutes
April 27, 2011 at Upton Fire Station

Members Present: Five

Joan Shanahan (JS)
Steve Bern (SB)
Jonathan Calianos (JC)
Karen Glowacki (KG)
Herman Meisner (HM)

Members Absent: Three

Paul Flaherty
Jennifer Malin
John O'Sullivan

Also present: Blythe Robinson (BR), Town Manager
Seema Kenney (SK), Personnel Board
David Mackey (DM), Co-Chair, Upton Historical Commission
Cathy Taylor (CT), Upton Historical Commission
Jon Mahr (JM), Upton Historical Commission

Chairman, Joan Shanahan, called the meeting to order, with a quorum, at 8:00 PM, following the Fiscal Year 2012-Budget Hearing. She announced additions to the agenda. Members of the Historical Commission will make a presentation regarding Article 9 on the Special Town Meeting Warrant for May 5, 2011.

BR and SK discussed concerns of the Personnel Board regarding the text of the preamble to the Finance Committee Fiscal Year 2012 Budget Recommendation (Attachment 1) and to twenty-one line items on page 6, Wage/Salary Details. The items were discussed and changes agreed upon. BR suggested that next year the Fincom consider rounding up the line items to provide a cushion. SK asked why there was no figure for line item 243 under the Personnel Board, Merit Bonus Pool. She said that if it was not going to be funded that it was confusing to leave it there. This should be a topic for future discussion. Fincom explained that line 243 was related to article 30.

There was a discussion about the possibility of reprinting the parts of Attachment 1 that had been corrected. BR felt that it a reprint should be done and offered to fund it. Fincom members preferred not to spend the money, but to print errata that will be attached to the Town Meeting Warrant, and read by the moderator, at the beginning of the Town Meeting. He has done this in the past and the document is already on the Town Website.

HM asked SK about Article 34: Can an employee use vacation time before it is earned. Both SK and BR answered that they cannot do this. HM asked why that language was removed from the article and the answer was that the lawyer reviewing it suggested it be removed to avoid confusion.

There was general agreement between the Fincom, Personnel Board and Town Manager that it should be a goal for next year to improve communication to avoid situations like this.

Chairman Shanahan invited members of the Upton Historical Commission (UHC) to make a presentation about Article 9 on the Special Town Meeting Warrant for May 5, Attachment 2. Members of the Fincom voted, by majority, to give an unfavorable recommendation for the article because they lacked information about it. JS contacted the other co-chairman of UHC and offered them an opportunity to present information three weeks ago.

DM, CT and JM from the UHC gave the presentation. The article was submitted by the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), and is a request from the Historical Commission for \$24,500 from the Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds, Reserved Fund-Historic Account, to fund an archaeological exploration of the Chamber at 18 Elm St. and to restore the stones to their original positions to avoid further damage and to prevent possible injury. DM reviewed the background of the acquisition of the property, and the work that has been done by Historical Commission members, volunteers, Town agencies and others to prepare the property to be opened as a park. Trails have been cleared, brush removed, a tree on top of the chamber has been removed and the house that was on the property was burned as a training exercise for the Fire Department. Following removal of the house the whole was filled and graded using private donations.

Since the purchase of the property, the stones of the Chamber have shifted, creating a hazard that is a safety issue. The town has a legal obligation to make it safe before officially opening the park. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) is requiring that an archaeological study and evaluation of the Chamber and stones be done before work begins. The actual work will cost approximately \$8000 and the remainder is the fee for the archaeological work. UHC has applied to NEARA for funding to leverage the CPA funding. Any money not spent, will be returned to CPA. The UHC returned about \$10,000 of the money originally voted from CPA funds for the initial purchase.

JM reviewed the amount of work that has been done on the property, saying that a conservative estimate of donations and volunteer work is around \$50,000. This included a design done by a landscape designer from Harvard University. The Commission did not anticipate this situation, but the work needs to be done, to ensure that the property is safe for public to use.

CT explained the universal interest in the Chamber and said that people from all over the world have visited. Some call for a tour, while others just enter the property even though there are signs posted. Access to the Chamber is not blocked. The UHC is discussing a gate for the entire property, but they recognize that if someone wants to enter they will bypass the gate. The fact that the Chamber is not obvious, and that there are nearby neighbors is helpful. Members of the Fincom are invited to stop at the park and see the work that has been done to create a significant asset for the town.

Members of the Fincom asked when the work would be done, if funded. Bids have been received and the work can begin as soon as funding is received. JS indicated that that the safety issue concerned her. JC expressed that he understood that the project was unforeseen and necessary to provide public safety. He was satisfied that the UHC has

acted in a responsible manner regarding funding by receiving donations and volunteer work, saving the town a considerable amount of money. **1. JC made a motion to reconsider action on Article 9, in light of the information received tonight, and KG seconded it. The motion passed unanimously. 2. JC made a second motion to recommend favorable action on Article 9 in light of new information regarding an unforeseen event and based on the responsible actions of the UHC in the past regarding this property. KG seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

BR advised that bids for the work at Leland Field have been opened, and the low bid was \$114,000. The plan is to leave Article 12 at \$10,000 to make sure there is enough funding in the event of a cost overrun.

3. Motion to adjourn by JC at 8:40, second by KG, passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Arnold

Attachments:

1. Finance Committee Fiscal Year 2012 Budget Recommendations
2. Special Town Meeting Warrant for May 5