

Members Present: Jo Lown, Chair, Bill Linnane, Cliff Watts, Ian Johnson, John E. Arnold, Brigitte Casemyr, Michael Meachen, Judy Lucas (arrived 7:15 p.m.). Absent: Christine Hirsch.

At 7:00 p.m. Ms. Lown called the meeting to order in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

Open Forum

There were no requests to address the committee.

FY10 Budget & Article Review

Country Club Operating Committee

Dexter Blois presented the Country Club Operating Committee budget request of \$473,610 for FY10, which reflects a small decrease from FY09. This budget is funded through an Enterprise Fund. Funds for this budget, which begins in July, are collected the following March when membership dues are paid. Mr. Blois expressed some concern about future membership numbers, as the waiting list has diminished significantly from prior years. The current estimated wait for membership is two years, and a membership drive is ongoing.

Fees are collected for memberships and for greens fees. Greens fees vary with the weather, and a rainy spring or early snows can decrease the amount collected. Town residents pay a lower membership fee than non-residents, and do not pay an initiation fee. Current membership cost is the same as last year, but may increase next year.

Current balance in the Enterprise Fund is approximately \$548,000, or a little more than one year of funding. The Country Club pays an indirect fee to the town for services used, including payroll, processing of funds collected, insurance, and DPW plowing. This is the only Enterprise Fund to pay this fee.

The Country Club Superintendent is under contract for five years, and supplies all labor, insurance, and expertise. The Country Club pays for supplies (such as fertilizer) and owns equipment. The Golf Professional is paid a contract amount plus profits from lessons, pro shop sales, golf cart rental, and a percentage of greens fees. The Golf Pro pays all salaries for his staff, and all other costs associated with running the Pro Shop.

Junior memberships are available for youth aged 13 to 18 and cost \$156 for the season. School golf teams play for free. The club includes 330 membership units, which can be for single memberships or couples. 70% of members are Westborough residents and 30% are from other towns.

Municipal Building Committee

Dexter Blois and George Barrette presented ARTICLE 18. Groundwater Monitoring at Vee Arc Property, requesting \$59,795, to be transferred from a prior year's Article, to continue the groundwater monitoring program (Phase 4) on town owned property at 50 Milk Street formerly known as the "Vee Arc Property". Phase III of the monitoring is expected to be completed in July. Phase IV will include additional monitoring and remedial action assessment. Putting a building on the site would cap it and mitigate the need for more remediation. Funds in this Article will pay for continued monitoring and a Phase IV report. Construction could not begin until Phase IV is completed. Requirements for clean-up of the site are dependant on the building use and location. Residential areas require more clean-up than industrial areas. The Public Safety Building is on the list of "shovel-ready" projects eligible for federal stimulus plan funding.

Public Safety Building progress report

The proposed building is three stories, and includes emergency vehicle access on Milk Street and Phillips Street, administrative office space, limited access space for Police Department use, quarters for Fire

Department use, and adequate parking. Lt. Robert Fryer has spearheaded an effort by public safety staff to get a piece of the World Trade Center to include in a Memorial to be included in the building. The current Firemen's Memorial will remain at the corner of Milk and Grove Streets, in a redesigned setting.

The Public Safety Building design is 95% complete. The committee would need a maximum of 60 days to prepare bid specifications, allow 30 days for bidding, and another 30 days for awarding of bids, for a total of 120 days. If federal stimulus funding is approved this process could be completed in as little as 90 days. The Board of Selectmen has determined this is not the right time to ask the town for funding for this capital project, and so no Article requesting funding is included on this Warrant. The cost of waiting to begin this project is difficult to assess. Prevailing wage laws will have an effect on this, as will the general economic climate. The Police Department and Fire Department buildings have serious issues which have not been addressed with the expectation that a new building would be completed in the near future.

School Committee

Anne Towle, Superintendent, Dan Hendricks, Director of Business and Administration, Craig Harris, Chairman, Karen Henderson, Vice Chair/Secretary, Bruce Tretter, Steve Doret, and Ilyse Levine-Kanji, presented the School Department budget request of \$38,255,528 for FY10. This request represents an increase of 1.32% over FY09, as recommended by the Town Manager.

Westborough High School was ranked 15th for Cost Efficiency and 16th for Academic Performance by Boston Magazine in a survey of public high schools in Massachusetts (Sept. 08.) Enrollment for next year is estimated to be down by 6 students. Class sizes may be slightly higher in some grades, but not outside the stated School Committee goals. Ethnic and racial makeup of the student population overall is 25% minority. Many students are English Language Learners, with a wide variety of languages (including African languages, Portuguese, and Indian dialects) spoken at home. Students have achieved a very high ranking in Verbal MCAS testing, a high ranking in Math MCAS testing, SAT averages of 563 on Verbal tests and 594 on Math tests, and most students taking Advanced Placement tests earn college credit.

Westborough School Department staff includes 500 employees, with 340 teachers (including guidance counselors.) 99.6% of the teachers are certified, and 98.7 % of these are highly qualified based on the number of credit hours of training in subject taught. Only 2.03% of the budget is paid to the Department's 14 administrators, for a cost per child of \$258 for administration (state average is \$401.) Only four retirements are planned this year.

The preliminary budget included increases in salaries (as negotiated), electric (50%) and natural gas (25%) expenses, SPED tuition (5% to 7%), transportation (5%), supplies and materials (3%), for a total increase of \$2,411,243 to provide level service. The Town Manager's recommendation included an increase of only \$500,000, leaving a shortfall of \$1,911,243. Funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA, or stimulus funding) for education has been allocated to Massachusetts to distribute to school districts, and Westborough's portion of these funds is expected to include additional Circuit Breaker Aid to bring the reimbursement to 70% (reimbursement for FY09 is 73%), increased IDEA Aid (No Child Left Behind funding), and increased Chapter 70 Aid, bringing the shortfall to \$771,900. This shortfall will require staff reductions of 18.20 FTE. Salary increases with the staff reductions will be 2.77%. Salary increases without the staff reductions would be 4.5%. Expenses have been decreased by 4.70%, to be supplemented by stabilization grant funding. Mr. Doret noted that if federal and state funding is not appropriated at the level budgeted, more staffing cuts will be needed.

ARTICLE 16 . Repairs at Various Schools (School Committee)

Request of \$90,000 for various repairs to school buildings including replacing the intercom system at the Fales School and replacing two hot water heaters at the high school. The Fales intercom (\$50,000) is original to the school and has many issues. The hot water heaters (\$40,000) are industrial units located in the original section

of the school building. Due to the tight fiscal situation in town, the School Committee will defer making other repairs.

Mr. Linnane requested detailed information similar to that provided by Assabet Valley Regional Vocational High School District. Mr. Doret replied that the School Committee is required to produce a single budget figure for town meeting vote. Dr. Towle explained that liaisons to the AFC are given the total budget package, which is quite lengthy, to share with AFC members. Mr. Doret commented that the reductions made to keep the budget within the Town Manager's recommendation were painful, but that the School Committee feels funding is adequate to accomplish the goals they have set.

Ms. Lown asked if there were any particular strategies used this year in preparing the budget. Dr. Towle noted more use of data in analysis of spending, for more performance based budgeting. Dr. Towle also stated that the budget choices required are difficult, and that the children affected are still with us in the fall. The School Committee also included as one of their budget goals "To develop a school budget that will be guided by academic excellence for all students and the financial ability of the Town of Westborough."

Dr. Towle reported that the transportation contract is up next year. She has asked Officer Dapolite and the school transportation officer to drive all the current routes to look for possibilities for consolidation. Mr. Doret stated that in the next few years, after federal stimulus funding ends, there will be the possibility of a \$3,000,000 shortfall in funding. There are only so many sources of funding to find, and transportation is one area that may need to be changed. Mr. Tretter is optimistic that this budgeting exercise may bear fruit. He feels that a town-wide discussion is needed to determine how funding should be allocated.

Dr. Towle reported that the district belongs to the Assabet Valley Collaborative, and is looking for more ways to develop collaborative agreements to share services and save resources. The School Committee is a separate purchasing agent from the town administration.

Mr. Doret commented that the current discussions have forced an increased expertise in budgeting which is valuable. Mr. Harris stated that it is difficult to make changes, even when it is necessary. Mr. Johnson stated that the School Committee must present a budget they are comfortable with. Mr. Tretter agreed, and stated that this budget will meet goals. 80% of the School Department budget is in salaries. When stimulus funding is included the budget increase is 4.5% over FY09. Dr. Towle noted that the School Department will be doing an ongoing evaluation of costs, and changes could be made to shift funds during the school year.

Negotiations with 10 unions in town, including the Westborough Teachers Union, begin in October. Mr. Doret noted that all parties wish to see quality education continue – how this can be accomplished is at issue.

Mr. Arnold requested an updated budget chart, including stimulus funding, in order to have a realistic basis of comparison with future budget requests.

Dr. Towle reported on a walk through of Gibbons Middle School with architects and representatives of the School Building Assistance Board. The SBA representatives were very positive about current building maintenance, and felt the school was a prime candidate for renovation. The SBA has been moving away from reconstruction projects in favor of renovation whenever possible.

ARTICLE: 30. Request for an Additional License for the sale of All Alcoholic Beverages To Be Drunk on The Premises

Spyro Economou, of Westborough House of Pizza, presented his request for an All Alcoholic Beverage license. He has been in business in Westborough for 40 years, and currently holds a Beer and Wine license. He explained that due to the depressed economy and increased competition he needs this added sales ability to keep his business going. This license does not transfer to another location.

Approval of minutes – Meeting No. 22, April 2, 2009.

Mr. Watts moved to approve the final draft of minutes of meeting No. 22, April 2, 2009. The vote to approve the minutes was 8 in favor, with 8 being present.

Work Session/Discussion**Liaison Updates**

Mr. Meachen reported that the revised Warrant shows the correct amount for the voting machines.

Ms. Casemyr reported that the correction to the Planning Board Article has been made on the final Warrant.

Mr. Johnson will meet with John Walden tomorrow to review the committee's questions. Ms. Lown will speak with Carl Balduf directly concerning the town sewer plan.

Ms. Lown has requested an updated recap and budget spreadsheet from Leah Talbot, and also notified Ms. Talbot of the change to the Council on Aging budget.

Mr. Linnane has spoken with Alma Demanche, who is in agreement with the budget adjustment.

Non-School Budgets (to be voted at next meeting):

- Treasurer/Collector
- Accountant
- Recreation
- Country Club Enterprise
- Veterans Services
- Veteran's Memorial
- Cultural Council

Non-Funding Articles (to be voted at next meeting):

- Article 1. Annual Town Election (Board of Selectman)
- Article 2. Rule of the Meeting (Town Coordinator)
- Article 3. Town Reports (Advisory Finance Committee)
- Article 5. Amend Salary Administration Plan (Personnel Board)
- Article 9. Nathan Fisher House Prop. Release of Pres. Restrict. (Selectmen)
- Article 10. Demolition By-Law (Historical Commission)
- Article 12. Meadow Road Parcels (Town Counsel)
- Article 13. Meadow Road Taking (Town Counsel)
- Article 14. Valley View Estates Easement Release (Town Counsel)
- Article 19. Increase to Excise Vehicle Demand Fees (Treasurer/Collector)
- Article 27. Zoning Bylaws and Zoning Map Amendment (Planning Board)
- Article 30. Request for an Additional License for the sale of All Alcoholic Beverages To Be Drunk on The Premises (Citizens' Petition)
- Article 32. Accept Cordials and Liqueurs License Provisions (Selectmen)

Discussion and votes on various FY2009 budgets

A table of votes taken is attached to these minutes.

Town Meeting Booklet

Ms. Lown has sent out a draft of the Letter to Voters for review. Information about the WWTP will need to be added. A rough draft of the Annual Town Meeting Booklet has been distributed for review. Committee discussed what information to include in booklet.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

Ms. Lown reported that Christine Hirsch has formally resigned from the committee.

Ms. Casemyr reported that Moody's is re-rating all towns in Massachusetts, due to the State budget difficulties.

Adjournment

At 9:55 p.m. Ms. Lucas moved to adjourn the meeting. The vote to adjourn was unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

Votes taken at the Finance Committee meeting on April 13, 2009

1) Budget votes

Budgets are voted on using figures current as of 4/13/09.

Water Operations, Dept. No. 64501, 64503 Salary \$501,562, Expenses \$1,738,223, Total \$2,239,785

Mr. Johnson moved to accept the \$501,562 salary and \$1,738,223 expenses.

Vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

Ms. Lown asked liaisons to monitor energy costs in this budget and in the sewer operations budget.

Sewer Operations, Dept. No. 64301, 64303 Salary \$636,205, Expenses \$313,927, Total \$950,132

Mr. Johnson moved to accept the \$636,205 salary and \$313,927 expenses.

Vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.