

Members Present: Jo Lown, Chair, F. Robert Brown, Bill Linnane, Brigitte Casemyr, Judy Lucas, Ian Johnson, John E. Arnold, Kevin Cronin, Michael Meachen. Absent: None.

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

### **Open Forum**

Ms. Casemyr introduced Tim Novak, a new member of the staff at Westborough TV. The goal of these broadcasts is to make sure everyone is heard and understood. Mr. Novak explained proper microphone technique for committee members.

### **Town Manager**

Jim Malloy introduced himself to committee members. He noted that his first week has been eventful, with historic rain storms last week. The storm created many problems, and will result in additional costs to the town for repairs. The extent of damage will be known in the next couple of weeks. Because the storm was very isolated the total damage cost may not be high enough to qualify for FEMA or MEMA funding. Our local state representatives and state senator have been contacted and will investigate ways the state may be able to appropriate supplemental funds to cover some of these costs. However, due to state funding shortages supplemental appropriations may not be possible.

Ms. Lown reported that the state budget numbers result in a reduction in local aid and a reduction in Quinn Bill aid for Westborough. Mr. Malloy is also expecting a shortage in fiscal receipts collected. Leah Talbot will complete the fiscal receipt report in the next couple of weeks. Mr. Malloy will have final numbers ready for Fall Town Meeting and will send information to the AFC as it becomes available.

Mr. Malloy noted that the State Legislature has also made it possible for the town to raise revenues from local meals and hotel tax increases. Ms. Casemyr asked that any analysis of these taxes take into account the downturn in business over the last year, and what affect the increased taxes would have on business. Ms. Lown noted the town has a large daytime population for which residents pay to provide services, which should also factor into the discussion. What surrounding towns do will also be considered. Communities that depend on state aid for a large portion of their income, such as Lowell, are severely impacted. Smaller communities that get a lower percentage of their income from state aid, such as Westborough, are less affected. The Telecommunications tax will bring more income to the town, and a change in the law governing required deposits to the overlay account will make more of the taxes collected available for use.

Mr. Malloy plans to make some changes to the budget process. The Board of Selectmen has requested a long range plan, which he will produce. Timing of the budget process will be changed, to have most of the Town Manager's work completed before the December vacation. Budget information will be disseminated electronically. The budget will include a five year capital plan. Mr. Malloy is also planning to work with the DPW to develop a management system that will track historical information on town roads, current condition (grading each road), and repairs/maintenance. He would also like to change the way Warrant articles are written to include more information for townspeople.

**Approval of minutes – Meeting No. 32, June 15, 2009.**

Mr. Johnson moved to approve the minutes of meeting No. 32, June 15, 2009. The vote to approve the minutes was 9 in favor, with 9 being present.

**Request for transfer from Reserve Fund.**

Wastewater Treatment Plant Board requested a transfer of \$22,100.76 from the AFC Reserve Fund. This deficit resulted from a higher than usual increase in the CPI, an increase in the electric rates and delivery rates, and increased legal services necessary to prepare the article for the Town Warrant. Committee members questioned the breakdown of expenses into the two budget lines listed on the transfer.

Mr. Johnson moved to transfer \$22,100.76 from AFC Reserve Account to Wastewater Treatment Plant accounts 5211 Electricity and 5219A Legal Services. The vote to approve the transfer was unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

Mr. Arnold requested more information be included with budget transfer requests in the future, and all committee members agreed additional information is needed.

**Liaison Updates**

Ms. Lown noted that the DOR Advisory she sent out concerning Regional Schools deals with state and local budget issues not specifically defined by the statute and regulations. Ms. Lucas reported that Assabet's budget and Westborough assessment to Assabet has been set.

Mr. Johnson will speak with Mr. Walden about an email sent from a concerned citizen about DPW hydrant painting. Ms. Lown reported that one issue brought up in the email appears to have been addressed.

Ms. Casemyr reported that there may be some unforeseen expenses from the Wastewater Treatment Plant due to need for a temporary repair to correct pH levels. Preliminary estimate for this repair is \$50,000. Not fixing this problem may negatively impact the town's eligibility for 0% financing for the new construction. The walk-through with the winning bidder was scheduled for mid-July. The WWTP Board will meet next on Wednesday.

Mr. Linnane met with Paula Skog, and reported that the Historical Commission has begun looking at what information they could put on the town web site. Ms. Skog will contact Mark Stockman to coordinate.

Liaison assignment requests will be made over the summer. Committee members are asked to send assignment preferences to Ms. Lown.

**FY 2009 Committee Reports**

- **Legislative Liaison Committee** -- Mr. Johnson reported committee has not met.
- **Government Study II Committee** – Mr. Arnold reports that the committee has not been disbanded by the Board of Selectmen, although they have not met recently. Mr. Arnold has distributed the committee recommendations to AFC members for their review. He requests any questions be forwarded to him, and he will ask the other Government Study Committee members to appear at a future meeting for discussion.
- **Chair** – Ms. Lown referred members to memo from Town Counsel concerning changes to Open Meeting Law. Ms. Lown also distributed the sections of the Open Meeting Law pertaining to email communication. Ms. Lown cautioned members not to "Reply All" to any email communication used to distribute information to committee members. Ms. Lown also distributed information from the Department of Revenue relevant to Town

Finance Committees. Mr. Johnson passed on information given out by the Association of Town Finance Committees, which committee members have found very helpful.

### **Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Ms. Lucas nominated Jo Lown to be Chairman of the Committee. Ms. Casemyr seconded the nomination. Mr. Johnson called for a vote. The vote to elect Ms. Lown was 8 in favor and one abstention (Lown), with 9 being present.

Ms. Casemyr nominated Ms. Lucas to be Vice-Chairman of the Committee. Ms. Lucas pointed out that she is in the last year of her current appointment and so cannot commit to serving more than one year in this position, but is honored by the nomination. Ms. Lown seconded the nomination. The vote to elect Ms. Lucas was 8 in favor and one abstention (Lucas), with 9 being present.

### **Comments and Concerns of Committee Members**

Mr. Brown asked how the town handles damage claims by individuals for losses caused by the recent flooding. Committee members thought town insurance may be required to cover this. The most recent storm (a “500 year storm”) has caused much damage to properties around town. Mr. Johnson noted that there was a study commissioned last year to look at drainage patterns throughout the town. Ms. Lown noted that individual residents should clear brush from culverts and drainage areas on their property. Mr. Johnson also asked individual residents to clear storm drains located near their properties, although Mr. Linnane urged caution when clearing drains during storms, and noted this should be done before the storm rather than during the storm.

Ms. Lown reported that the revised budget recap estimate, including new state local aid figures shows a deficit of approximately \$187,000 but this is without the year end local receipts and new growth numbers, which should be forthcoming. Before the reduction in local aid, the AFC’s recommendations showed an excess levy of \$58,200; after ATM the estimate was \$32,520.

Mr. Linnane requested additional information on the transfers requested at this meeting and at the last meeting, even though the votes have been taken. Mr. Linnane also requested that Ms. Lown delegate more of the work necessary to prepare for ATM, although it does look as if the new Town Manager will be providing more information in a more useful format. Ms. Lown suggested a Report and Recommendation Booklet Subcommittee to oversee the production of the Town Meeting booklets. Mr. Linnane requested each Liaison write up a summary of their work with the committees, to maintain an ongoing written record of issues and discussions.

Mr. Johnson questioned the need for a meeting at the end of August, and requested that any August meeting be scheduled as soon as possible. Ms. Lown proposed a tentative date of August 31 if there is information to relay for fall special town meeting.

Mr. Johnson noted that while the town does now have the ability to raise the hotel and meals tax, he is reluctant to raise any tax without having done a more extensive review of the expense budget, as the types of taxes proposed are often less effective than one would hope. Mr. Johnson also felt a discussion of what constitutes core services of the town does need to occur before raising taxes. Ms. Lown asked liaisons to consider opportunities for savings during their reviews of budgets by evaluating what services the town must provide, what is “good to have,” and what is “nice to have.” Mr. Linnane feels that more education of town meeting members is needed.

### **Adjournment**

Ms. Lucas moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m.