

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee  
Minutes of Meeting No. 30, FY2010  
May 6, 2010

Approved  
June 28, 2010

Members Present: Jo Lown, Chair, F. Robert Brown, Brigitte Casemyr, Judy Lucas, Ian Johnson, John E. Arnold, Michael Meachen, Kevin Cronin. Absent: Bill Linnane.

At 7:10 p.m. Ms. Lown called the meeting to order in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

#### **Call to Order/Open Forum**

There were no requests to address the Committee.

#### **Approval of Minutes – Meeting No. 27, April 26, 2010**

Mr. Meachen requested an amendment to the Selectmen budget vote, noting that his name should not appear as opposing the motion. Mr. Johnson moved to accept the minutes as amended. The vote to approve the minutes was 6 in favor, 1 abstention (Arnold), with 7 being present.

#### **Memo from the Town Manager**

Ms. Lown asked the Committee to review the memo received that afternoon from the Town Manager. The Committee discussed the request for re-instatement of the cuts in eight 8 departments. Ms. Casemyr felt the tax increase and decreased property valuations estimated by the Town Assessor made it difficult to consider supporting any increases in the budget. If anything, the Town should be looking at cutting back more. Mr. Johnson disagreed – he pointed out that this year's increase in spending is only 1.3%, the lowest since he has been on the AFC. He noted the comparative increases over the past years and added that the tax rate increase is a result of valuation decreasing so dramatically. Mr. Brown felt the Town Manager was reversing his original request to reduce the budget, and was opposed to entertaining these requests for more funds. The Committee was polled and the consensus was to review the departments listed in the Town Manager's memo. Mr. Cronin noted that the requested changes to the budget amounted to a difference of \$46,735.

#### **Assessor reconsideration**

Mr. Johnson moved to recommend Expenses of \$14,899. There was some discussion as to whether there should be contingency in this budget for defending abatement cases, and, if so, how much. Mr. Cronin noted the amounts that was previously appropriated and expended. The Committee agreed that covering one potential case in the budget was sufficient, and that further cases, being unforeseen, could be dealt with by other means. Vote to approve the budget recommendation is 2 in favor, 6 opposed (Brown, Casemyr, Johnson, Arnold, Meachen, Cronin), with 8 being present. The motion fails and the original recommendation stands.

#### **Treasurer reconsideration**

Mr. Johnson noted that there was the potential for the \$33,000 in bank charges to be reduced by \$20,000 if the Town went with a bi-weekly payroll and to direct deposit, but this has yet to happen. Ms. Casemyr understood that there was agreement by both departments that Town Counsel would be used more to reduce the added costs of outside counsel. After considerable discussion, Mr. Johnson moved to recommend Expenses of \$53,925. Vote to approve the budget recommendation is 4 in favor, 4 opposed (Brown, Casemyr, Lucas, Cronin), with 8 being present. The motion fails and the original budget recommendation stands.

**Central Purchasing reconsideration**

Mr. Johnson was comfortable with the Committee's previous vote on this budget. The difference of \$1,746 was less than the amount unexpended. Mr. Arnold pointed out that if emergency vehicle repairs are needed, the Committee could act to provide for them. No motion was made.

**Buildings & Grounds reconsideration**

Mr. Cronin noted the difference from the Committee's recommendation and the Town Manager's was \$3,000. The Committee discussed capital projects being put before Town Meeting, that the new rating system put some projects out several years and there may be more emergency repairs. Ms. Casemyr felt all contingencies should be removed from budgets. Ms. Lown said the Committee would need to be accessible and to respond to requests to transfer funds for emergency repairs as the need arises. It was noted that including money for contingencies in all budgets puts an extra burden on the taxpayer. No motion made.

**Building Commissioner reconsideration**

Mr. Johnson felt the vote on this budget was inconsistent. Mr. Meachen noted that this was the only budget recommendation which reduced employee hours. Mr. Arnold felt it is important to honor the agreement not to cut salaries. He moved to recommend Salaries/Wages of \$271,493. Ms. Lown noted the Committee's strategy for evaluating reductions; that travel and conferences may be non-essential, except where needed to stay current on legal and regulatory issues. Ms. Casemyr asked if everyone really needs to travel to do so when it is possible to stay current by other means and information is available from the State or online. Mr. Johnson noted that travel was not reduced in other departments and felt that if travel is to be cut, it should be done across the board. Ms. Casemyr noted that the Committee did not choose what to cut, each of the departments did, and the Committee considers whether an overage in one line item is covered by other money in the budget. Mr. Johnson reiterated his concern that the result was inconsistent. Mr. Meachen moved the question.

The Committee votes to recommend Salary and Wages in the amount of \$271,493 with 5 in favor, 3 opposed (Brown, Casemyr, Lucas), with 8 being present.

Mr. Cronin reported the budget increase in the amount of \$5,211. No motion was made on the \$330 difference in Expenses. Adjustments were made to the financial worksheets and to the draft Report & Recommendation.

**DPW reconsideration**

Mr. Cronin reported the difference between the two recommendations was \$22,444. The reduction was less than the 1.8% cut, by reinstatement of the amount identified for fertilization of ball fields. The Committee reviewed the Town Manager's memo and reasons for the increase. Mr. Johnson noted the ability to deficit spend Snow & Ice, which would address any fluctuations in gas prices and weather. Ms. Lown reported that the budget for expenses was \$75,000 higher than expended in FY09. No motion was made.

**Council on Aging reconsideration**

Mr. Cronin noted the difference as \$3,704. Mr. Meachen said that the Committee had looked over the history of expenditures and was comfortable that the funding met the needs identified. The State provides homemaker services and COA covers additional homemaker services. No motion was made.

**Legal reconsideration**

Mr. Arnold reviewed the items identified. Members reviewed their notes. It was noted that Town Counsel said he was comfortable reducing outside legal costs as requested, the reduction would not have a significant impact, and there would just be less of a cushion. No motion was made.

Mr. Meachen felt the budgets were consistently voted by keeping Salaries/Wages intact and reducing Expenses.

**Article 11E**

Mr. Johnson moved to recommend the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$10,750 from Water Retained Earnings and the sum of \$43,001 from Sewer Retained Earnings for the purpose of this article (total of \$53,751). Vote to approve the article recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**ATM Warrant Article – Deliberation/Vote**

**Article 24 (Delete/Add New Personnel Bylaw)**

Mr. Johnson moved to recommend the Town so vote. Vote to approve the article recommendation is 4 in favor, 4 opposed (Casemyr, Lown, Arnold, Cronin). There is no recommendation. Mr. Johnson suggested that the wording for the booklet regarding this article should be “no majority vote”. Mr. Arnold requested that, as a courtesy to Committee members not able to attend Town Meeting, the prior votes on this article with 8 members present be reported at Town Meeting. Ms. Lown noted the Committee’s obligation to report on the Article. She proposed that the results of the votes taken at both meetings be included in the Committee’s Report as presented in the draft, along with objective “for” and “against” arguments.

**AFC Report & Recommendation to Town Meeting**

Mr. Joe Harrington brought the Committee up-to-date on his preparations for Town Meeting.

Mr. Johnson proposed submitting an Article at Fall Town Meeting to transfer some Free Cash to the stabilization fund.

The Committee reviewed the draft Report and Recommendation, discussed and amended the language. Mr. Johnson moved to approve the Report & Recommendation as amended. Vote to approve was unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Adjournment**

Ms. Lucas moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:10 p.m.

**Document List**

Memorandum from Jim Malloy to the Finance Committee dated May 6, 2010, regarding “Budget Reductions.”