

Members Present: John E. Arnold, Chair, Brigitte Casemyr, Peter Allen, Bill Linnane, Jo Lown, Ian Johnson, Kevin Cronin. Absent: Jim Tepper.

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

Call to Order/Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Review Warrant Articles – Special Town Meeting

DPW: John Walden, Carl Balduf

Article 3 – South Street Water Line Increase in Debt Authorization

John Walden, Manager of Public Works, and Carl Balduf, Town Engineer under Public Works, appeared before the Committee to present this Article. Mr. Walden explained that the cost of this project had come in considerably higher than anticipated, partly due to the quantity of asphalt which would be required to resurface the roadway. Due to the deficient estimate, he committed not to request major project funding in the future before bids are received. He added that the priority now was to get all utility work done by Thanksgiving and water work completed before the onset of freezing temperatures, so that final paving can be done in the spring.

Mr. Walden said that, while Chapter 90 money would be used to fund the cost of the work over the amount authorized at the May Town Meeting, he is asking for an increase in the debt authorization to allow the Chapter 90 funds to be available for the scheduled maintenance of other streets in town. Ms. Lown questioned the need for granite curbing, and Mr. Walden explained that the granite curbing in this area would help prevent run-off problems by keeping water in the street and away from nearby homes. He added that although granite curbing costs more, an asphalt berm curb is temporary and not ideal for a main road. Mr. Balduf explained that this project would require 2,600 linear feet of curb, which at about \$32/ft totaled approximately \$85,000. No additional sidewalks are being added and the road will not be widened.

Ms. Casemyr felt the work was necessary but questioned the means used for funding it. She added that the Wastewater Treatment Plant will be completed next year and is another big impact and that although this is a Water and not a Sewer project, the cost is still borne by the residents.

Article 4 – DPW Facility Energy Improvements

Mr. Walden explained that these improvements were part of an Energy Efficiency Evaluation which has also included the installation of more energy efficient lights by National Grid. This proposal to replace the old hot air system with radiant heat will result in considerable savings to the town. Mr. Walden added that this was not on the capital improvement plan. Mr. Johnson noted the expected 6-year payback and asked Mr. Walden to check on the life expectancy of the new system. Jim Malloy, Town Manager, said the work would cost \$30,580 to do, but energy rebates bring that figure down to just under \$28,000. Ms. Lown requested a spreadsheet showing the projected savings.

Mr. Malloy added that this project was timed to take advantage of available rebates, and in order to enjoy the energy savings this winter. Mr. Walden confirmed that the work was ready to move forward as soon as approved by the town.

Article 14 – Water Conduit Exemption Application – Engineering

Mr. Walden explained that Steve Doret (Green Technology Advisory Committee) had realized it might be possible to generate electricity from the water line going into the Water Treatment Plant. Mr. Doret did a quick review and felt the town could potentially realize electricity savings of at least \$17,000. In order to move ahead, application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission must be made for a water conduit exemption license. The funds requested in this article would pay the engineering costs associated with making such an application.

Mr. Walden explained that this first phase of the project was to collect data in order to make the application. Once the license is obtained, the next phase of the work would be the installation of a hydro-electric turbine. Mr. Walden also noted that this would not affect water pressure, as it relates to the raw water entering the Treatment Plant. He agreed to give the Committee more information on the total cost of the project but said that Mr. Doret had estimated costs around \$60-70,000.

Town Treasurer/Collector: Joanne Savignac

Article 1 – FY2011 Debt Service Amendments

Joanne Savignac, Town Treasurer/Collector, appeared before the Committee to present this article. Ms. Savignac explained that there would be a reduction of the budget due to the timing of the Massachusetts Water Pollution Abatement Trust's closing of the last funding round. Instead of the first payment being due in FY2011, the first principal payment will not be due until FY2012, and there will be only one interest payment. This money will still need to be paid in FY2012, but it results in a reduced budget for FY2011.

Article 11 – Municipal Relief Act

Joanne Savignac, Town Treasurer/Collector, appeared before the Committee to present this article. Ms. Savignac explained that a change made by the Municipal Relief Act allows a new process for the Town's handling of abandoned funds (e.g., uncashed checks) if the Town adopts the statute. The process to get those funds back into the General Fund was a long, drawn-out process. The Municipal Relief Act allows towns to declare checks void after one year—but added a requirement for a vote of the legislative body, hence Article 11. Ms. Savignac explained that these uncashed checks go into an account called "tailings." These funds are advertised for 60-90 days, during which time payees can come and claim their money.

Board of Selectmen/Town Manager: Jim Malloy

Article 7 – Charter Amendment

Jim Malloy, Town Manager, appeared before the Committee to present this article. Mr. Malloy explained that the Board of Selectmen typically meets twice a month. However, during the summer, the meetings are often held monthly. During the weeks they don't meet, it is sometimes difficult to obtain the signatures required to allow the Town to pay payroll and bills on time. This Article would give the Town Manager the authority to sign off on payroll and accounts payable, to ensure timely payment. Mr. Johnson noted that it makes more sense for the Town Manager to do this, as he already has the day-to-day oversight of these matters.

Article 8 – Timing of Annual Town Meeting

Jim Malloy, Town Manager, appeared before the Committee to present this article. Mr. Malloy explained that Joe Harrington, Town Moderator, held a Post-Town Meeting review during which there was discussion about the difficulty of getting a quorum at Town Meeting. It was decided to conduct a survey to see what residents would like to do. The Board of Selectmen have put forward this article in response to the results of that survey, suggesting a March rather than a May Town Meeting, beginning at 10 a.m. on a Saturday rather than 1 p.m. Mr. Malloy added that the motion would specify the change as becoming effective at Town Meeting 2012.

Ms. Lown noted that Town Meeting was changed to May because the financial numbers were better in May, and all budgeting is done at Annual Town Meeting, not at Fall Town Meeting. Mr. Malloy responded that if State aid came in lower than expected departments might have to hold off on expenditures or doing certain projects.

Article 10 – Water Use Restriction Bylaw

Jim Malloy, Town Manager, appeared before the Committee to present this article. He is recommending that the Board of Selectmen pass over this article due to an error in drafting it. Mr. Malloy explained that when the level of the water at Sandra Pond gets to 6.5 feet, a water emergency is declared. This normally happens during the summer months, when the Board of Selectmen only meets once a month. This article was to allow the Town Manager to act so that the Board of Selectmen need not convene an emergency meeting. However, in his draft Mr. Malloy left in the phrase, “determination by majority vote of the Board of Selectmen.” This article will therefore be passed over until the spring Town Meeting.

Joe Harrington, Town Moderator, felt that this would still be a good opportunity to explain the situation to the public. Ms. Lown added that many residents do not know what leads to the declaring of a water shortage, and felt it would be useful at Town Meeting to explain the rules for each level.

Article 13 – Veterans Freedom Park Signage

Jim Malloy, Town Manager, appeared before the Committee to present this article. Mr. Malloy explained that the Veterans group has gotten quotes to install a sign and a flagpole, which is lit by a solar-powered light, at the new Town park on West Main Street. He added that though a flag was not included, some money had been left to the Veterans group last year to purchase a flag. The design for the sign may be available by Town Meeting.

Relating to the South Street Water Line article, Mr. Malloy noted that the Chapter 90 funds come from the Transportation Bond Act, which expires this year. He felt that there was some concern about the State’s finances going forward, and therefore that Chapter 90 funds should not be relied upon for this project. He is recommending that departments budget for a 10% reduction in State aid again this year.

Advisory Finance Committee

Article 15 – Appropriate into Stabilization Fund

Mr. Johnson explained that this is basically a rainy day fund, or savings account, for the Town. This had been done in the past, and should really be put on every warrant as the last article. Mr. Arnold noted that getting the money out of the fund requires a vote of Town Meeting. Ms. Lown added that this money provided an alternate source of funds rather than slashing services, and could be used for capital expenditures as well. Mr. Johnson noted that this kind of appropriation is looked on favorably by bond rating agencies, which is a good thing for the Town.

Preparation for Special Town Meeting

Deliberation and Voting on Recommendations regarding Special Town Meeting Articles

The Committee agreed to try and do the deliberating and voting for each article’s recommendation at Monday’s meeting. Mr. Harrington will also present Article 9 at Monday’s meeting.

Discuss preparation of Town Meeting booklet

Mr. Arnold reviewed the information Leah Talbot (Town Accountant) had provided. Ms. Lown will use Leah’s spreadsheet to make the AFC recap sheet. Ms. Lown added that she would like to show the difference between the May and the Fall Town budgets, if there is time. Mr. Arnold will pull the final draft of the Warrant into the booklet format, draft the Message to Voters, and send to Committee members for Monday’s meeting. Any topics to be included in the Message to Voters should be emailed to Mr. Arnold.

AFC Survey Project

Deliberation/action expected; vote to proceed or not

Ms. Casemyr reviewed the changes made from the last meeting. She has also added a field for those who wish to enter their name. Assuming approval, she will meet with Mark Stockman tomorrow to go over the survey and get it set up. Ms. Casemyr also called Ellen Harvey to obtain permission to hand out the postcards at the Transfer and Recycling Station, and has prepared text regarding the survey to go in the Town Meeting booklet. Mr. Cronin suggested handing out the cards at Arts in Common as well. Ms. Lown made a motion to go ahead with the survey as presented, with the exception of deferring the discussion about payment for printing cards. The vote to approve the motion to go ahead with the survey is unanimous, 7 in favor with 7 being present.

Ms. Casemyr explained that the cost of printing 500 cards would be \$72, plus \$10 for shipping and handling, and felt the \$82 was a worthwhile expense. Ms. Lown added that the AFC booklet was smaller this year and therefore would not cost as much to print. Mr. Allen felt it was a reasonable use of AFC funds, as the survey ultimately benefits the Town. After further discussion Ms. Lown made a motion to approve spending \$82 for printed postcards. The vote to approve the motion is 4 in favor, 3 opposed (Linnane, Arnold, Johnson), with 7 being present.

Chair and Committee Liaison reports

Ms. Lown announced that Arts in Common would be on October 2nd, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Bay State Commons. She added it would be a great day and encouraged Town residents to attend.

Mr. Arnold asked the Committee to check their calendars and let him know if they plan to attend the Association of Town Finance Committees Annual Meeting, to be held at the Tri-County High School in Franklin. Payment must be made by October 15th.

Mr. Arnold announced that, in conjunction with National Depression Screening Day, Westborough Youth and Family Services is offering free, confidential mental health screening on Thursday, October 7th, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. in room 21 of the Forbes Municipal Building. Call Youth & Family Services, 508-366-3090, to make an appointment.

Mr. Arnold explained that he would send a letter informing the town clerk of the vote confirming Mr. Linnane as a member of the Capital Expenditures Planning Committee, and then Mr. Linnane would be sworn in.

Ms. Casemyr noted that the Wastewater Treatment Plant was going well and was ahead of schedule. The Advisory Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen are invited to tour the site on Wednesday, October 13th, at 8 a.m.

Adjournment

Ms. Casemyr moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m. The vote to approve adjournment was unanimous, 6 in favor with 6 being present.

Document List

Chapter 200A: Section 9A. Disposition of abandoned funds, distributed by Joanne Savignac, 9-23-2010.
Debt FY 2011 spreadsheet, distributed by Joanne Savignac, 9-23-2010.
FY11 Rev Exp 9-21-10, Excel spreadsheet, from Leah Talbot, Town Accountant.
FY11 Dept Totals 9-21-2010, Excel spreadsheet, from Leah Talbot, Town Accountant.
AFC Survey-Ready for vote, from Brigitte Casemyr.