

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee  
Minutes of Meeting No. 10, FY2011  
December 6, 2010

Approved  
January 10, 2011

Members Present: John E. Arnold, Chair, Peter Allen, Bill Linnane, Jo Lown, Ian Johnson, Kevin Cronin, Jim Tepper. Absent: Brigitte Casemyr. (There remains one open position on the Committee.)

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.

### **Approval of Minutes**

#### **Meeting No. 09, November 1, 2010**

Ms. Lown requested an amendment to the minutes as follows: on page 4, under "Comments & Concerns," the first sentence should read, "would like to have a heads up of what can be expected this year." The last sentence of the first paragraph should read, "Ms. Lown added that the results appeared to be heavily weighted towards the DPW, while municipal buildings were not on the list for the ATM." Mr. Linnane moved to accept the minutes as amended. The vote to approve the minutes is unanimous, 7 in favor with 7 being present.

### **Discussion of Advisory Finance Committee FY2012 Budget**

#### **Review/Discussion of budget prepared by Chairman**

Mr. Arnold presented the draft AFC budget. He explained that the Clerical Wages line is down from last year due to the new Administrative Assistant starting at Step 1. Also, a 1.6% increase was added to Expenses for copying and printing. It was noted that a transfer was required this year to cover printing/copying costs for the Annual Town Meeting. The Committee will investigate ways of cutting down on printing costs. The Committee indicated their satisfaction with the budget and it was approved by consensus.

### **AFC Preparations for Annual Town Meeting budget and article reviews**

#### **Further review/discussion of proposed budget questions**

Mr. Arnold presented the revised FY2012 Departmental Budget Background Information sheet. He noted that a new first question had been added, to provide opportunity to describe any plans for improving efficiency in services provided to the Town. This document would be sent out in January, after the Town Manager's recommendations are out. Mr. Linnane suggested adding "attachments acceptable," to save input if the department has information already prepared. Mr. Cronin noted that while attachments might be helpful, it is still important that the questions as presented in the document are fully answered. Ms. Lown suggested the word "effectiveness" rather than "efficiency," and felt a description of any plans for improving efficiency should also be asked for.

### **Review/discuss possible common questions to be asked during liaison meetings**

Mr. Arnold introduced a draft Departmental Liaison Question sheet, noting that – at the last meeting – some questions from the budget questionnaire were thought useful but may be best elicited during Liaison meetings with department heads. Ms. Lown was concerned with having set questions for all departments, when each department is different; and yet liaisons would have additional work if they were to draft their own questions. She felt it should be more a guideline than a fixed format. Mr. Tepper felt that a structured approach was very instructional for the Committee members new to this process, as it makes clear the kind of information being asked for, and clarifies the scope of each department's services and function. Ms. Lown noted that some of these questions have already been asked and don't need to be

asked again. This information could be passed on from liaison to liaison. Mr. Johnson felt the first three questions on the sheet were important for setting a baseline, and added that a kind of Committee handbook would be useful, which could be updated by each liaison. He also noted that the answers to those three questions would be helpful to have ahead of time, before the department heads came before the Committee, to streamline the process, and have a baseline understanding before the presentation takes place.

Mr. Johnson noted the failure to adequately explain capital expenditure issues at Town Meeting. He felt budgeting should be based on what the goals of the Town are for the next year; whatever is being done should be tied into those goals, and the Committee should be able to articulate that at Town Meeting. Mr. Arnold suggested a separate set of questions for proponents of warrant articles. Mr. Allen wondered if question four on the liaison sheet would be better placed on the budget page. Mr. Johnson added that perhaps liaisons should be working with departments on these questions rather than giving them to the department as homework. Mr. Arnold noted that the liaison could help explain what information was needed, but the phrasing should be in the department's words. Mr. Johnson added that the department could prepare its answers, then review them with their liaison before preparing a final draft to bring to the whole Committee. Mr. Linnane will send an email to Jim Malloy, Town Manager, to let him know of this new process.

Mr. Arnold thanked the Committee for their comments and indicated that, with modifications based on the discussion, a revised version could serve as a starting point for the liaison handbook that has been discussed. The intention was not to require these questions to be asked by each liaison every year and this, too, will be reflected in the next version.

#### **Discussion of meeting calendar for January – May 2011**

Mr. Arnold noted that the draft budget would not be out until mid- to late January, and that Monday/Thursday AFC meetings will probably begin in early February. He will be posting the next meeting of the Committee for January 10, 2011.

#### **Chair, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports**

Mr. Arnold noted that Leah Talbot had sent an electronic version of the Appropriations Report. He has also received the Departmental Expenditures Report. Mr. Arnold added that tomorrow is Seasonal Flu Clinic day, at the Senior Center in Rogers Road. He has also sent out the spreadsheet of liaison appointments.

Mr. Cronin noted that tomorrow is the 69<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pearl Harbor.

Ms. Lown announced that Arts in Common would air on WTV beginning Wednesday, December 1, and is also available as video on demand.

Mr. Allen extended a thank you to Derek Saari, who invited him to a November 30<sup>th</sup> work session on CSX's expansion of their rail yard; he will let the other departments know he'll be in contact next week.

Mr. Linnane noted that there would be a meeting of the Wastewater Treatment Plant tomorrow. The Wastewater Treatment Plant project is under budget, and there is good teamwork, from the town side as well as from engineers and contractors.

#### **Comments & Concerns of Committee Members**

Mr. Linnane explained that the work at Mill Pond was to increase the capacity on the spillway, which allows for a certain amount of runoff. The work will be completed in the spring.

Mr. Allen noted the November 15<sup>th</sup> Wall Street Journal article he had emailed to the Committee. He felt breaking out expenditures by department in terms meaningful to individual taxpayers would be useful for the Committee's Spring booklet. The Committee felt this was a good idea, as the Committee has been asked to present information in a way that is meaningful to Town residents.

Mr. Linnane feels there is a need to improve communication between the Town departments and the AFC, and he met with Jim Malloy to discuss improving communication. Mr. Linnane noted that Mr. Malloy is to resume his Manager's Notes on the Town Web site, and this will be a good source of information. He added that perhaps part of the Selectmen bi-weekly report could be made available to the AFC, to keep it in the loop. Ms. Lown noted that she had asked Mr. Malloy to send more information out electronically, as the box in Town Hall cannot always be checked for mail. Mr. Arnold agreed that regular reports would be welcome and appreciated. He added that liaisons could also ask their department heads for better communication. Ms. Lown noted that it may be helpful to know who the BOS liaisons are.

Mr. Linnane told the Committee he was called by the DPW and shown the new equipment, a single-axle dumpster plow, which looks brand-new and has very low mileage. It was purchased very cheaply from another town that couldn't keep up with the payments.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Johnson moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. Vote to adjourn was 7 in favor, with 7 being present.

### **Document List**

Draft AFC budget, prepared by John E. Arnold.

Revised FY2012 Departmental Budget Background Information sheet, prepared by John E. Arnold.

Departmental Liaison Question sheet, prepared by John E. Arnold.

Liaison Appointment Spreadsheet, prepared by John E. Arnold.

Appropriations Report, sent by Leah Talbot.

Departmental Expenditures Report.

DPW Snow Budget for FY 10-11.