

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting No. 21, FY2011
March 21, 2011

Approved
March 31, 2011

Members Present: John E. Arnold, Chair, Brigitte Casemyr, Peter Allen, Bill Linnane, Jo Lown (7:05), Ian Johnson, Ed Behn, Jim Tepper, Kathy Rosenblum Senie (7:25). Absent: None.

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. 19, March 10, 2011

Ms. Casemyr had emailed corrections to the minutes. Mr. Johnson moved to accept the minutes as amended. The vote to approve the minutes is 7 in favor, 1 abstention (Lown), with 8 being present.

Meeting No. 20, March 14, 2011

Mr. Tepper moved to accept the minutes. The vote to approve the minutes is 7 in favor, 1 abstention (Lown), with 8 being present.

AFC Preparations for Annual Town Meeting budget and article reviews

Departmental budget discussions

Sewer Treatment Plant

Jack Goodhall, Town Engineer, and Mike Stanton, Treatment Plant Board Chair, appeared before the Committee to present this budget. Mr. Goodhall noted that Salaries/Wages are not increasing. In Expenses, the Electricity line item has increased due the impact of the ongoing construction. The second increase is in Contract Services, with the increase based on the current estimate of the contracted calculation (based on CPI and PPI values as of a date in July) and also due to the impact of the on-going construction. Legal Services is level-funded, but if an up-coming NPDES decision is appealed, additional monies would be requested. Mr. Goodhall explained that chemical treatments (including the treatments to reduce the level of phosphorous) have also caused the budget to increase.

Mr. Goodhall noted that, with the increased capacity and complexity of the updated Treatment Plant, the estimators for proper staffing call for an increase of 2.5 positions. However, the Veolia staff who run the plant are comfortable with adding 1 additional person to the permanent staff along with an additional \$50,000 for a partial-year consultant position. The use of this consultant will help with the transition to the new plant controls and that position's performance will help determine what, if any, additional staffing will be required in the future.

Ms. Lown asked about the timing of the increases to the budget since they are estimates. She asked whether some of the increase could be postponed until the Fall Special Town Meeting since, by then, the specific CPI and PPI values would be known and the estimates would be more accurate. After some discussion, Ms. Lown suggested that, if the full estimates continue to be included in the vote at the Annual Town Meeting, then we could look at the estimates in the Fall and move to reduce the budgets if the current estimates are found to be too high.

Mr. Goodhall and Mr. Stanton also reported that the clarifier cover that collapsed during one of the snowstorms would have its repairs covered by insurance except for a \$10,000 deductible that is expected to be covered from within the current Treatment Plant Budget.

Council on Aging

Alma DeManche, Director, Charlie Flood, Council on Aging Chair, and Sue Abladian and George Barrette, Council members, appeared before the Committee to present this budget. Ms. DeManche noted that the last significant change to the Council's budget had been 22 years ago, when the Senior Center first opened. At the time, there were 1,900 seniors in Westborough—now there are 3,237. Ms. DeManche is asking for an additional \$7,674 above the Town Manager's recommendation, to allow the outreach worker position to increase from 19 hrs/week to 25 hrs/week (35 hrs/week was originally requested).

Ms. Demanche explained that the Professional Services line item included their Homemaker, a position originally 18 hrs/week which had been cut to 14 hrs/week last year. Returning the 4 hours to the position would increase the budget by \$2,704. Ms. DeManche pointed out that this position saves the Town money by making it possible for the elderly to remain in their homes, and continue being taxpayers.

There was some discussion as to whether two part-time outreach workers could provide the same or better services as one full-time outreach worker. Mr. Tepper noted the limited space at the Senior Center, and felt that maximizing the use of the trained worker already in place made sense. Ms. Lown felt that other larger budgets could bear a decrease to enable this smaller department to provide a much-needed service to the community.

Ms. DeManche explained the other services the Center provides, such as delivering Meals on Wheels, the provision of 2 buses which enable seniors to run errands, and the processing of fuel assistance applications. A recent program run in cooperation with the Police Department sold key lockboxes, which ensured that police answering a 911 call had easy access to a senior's home. The Senior Center parking lot expansion was welcomed by the Council. This work will add 20-25 spaces and provide more accessible handicapped parking. Mr. Flood noted that during an event, the overflow parking on Rogers Road poses a safety hazard, as fire trucks are unable to get through. Ms. Abladian added that a new Web site outlines the Center's services.

Updates on Committee member liaison work/meetings to date

Mr. Arnold distributed an updated spreadsheet from Leah Talbot, which includes a reduction in the Personnel Board budget of \$7,497 due to a cash grant which no longer needs to be paid. Mr. Arnold noted that Thursday's agenda would include a more detailed walk-through of the warrant articles.

Mr. Behn noted that Town Manager Jim Malloy had been included in the discussions regarding the Library's proposed HVAC project. He also had received a breakdown of police safety details from Leah Talbot: of \$330,000 billed by the Police Department for details, \$58,000 was paid by the DPW and other town departments, and the remaining \$275,000 came from private contractors (National Grid, Verizon, etc.).

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Arnold announced that the Westborough State Hospital Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, March 29, 2011, at 7 p.m., to present information about the property. The hearing will be in the Forbes Municipal Building.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

Ms. Casemyr noted that the Board of Selectmen vote tomorrow on whether to place questions that had been requested by citizens on the ballot.

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Ms. Lown felt the Committee should discuss the use of free cash at Thursday's meeting, and determine where the funds are coming from for each warrant article. She distributed an article from the Department of Revenue on free cash, and recommended their Web site as a good source of financial information.

Mr. Johnson informed the Committee that he intends to run for the open seat on the Board of Selectmen. However, he still hopes to complete his 3-year term on the Finance Committee.

Adjournment

Ms. Casemyr moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m. Vote to adjourn was 9 in favor, with 9 being present.

Document List

AFC Liaison Status Spreadsheet, prepared by J. E. Arnold.

Budget Background Information sheet, Council on Aging.

Observations on Health Care Insurance Costs, prepared by Ed Behn.