

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee  
Minutes of Meeting No. 24, FY2011  
April 4, 2011

Approved  
April 28, 2011

Members Present: John E. Arnold, Chair, Brigitte Casemyr, Peter Allen, Bill Linnane, Jo Lown, Ian Johnson, Ed Behn, Jim Tepper, Kathy Rosenblum Senie. 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. 22, March 24, 2011**

Deferred to next meeting.

### **AFC Preparations for Annual Town Meeting budget and article reviews Discussion of Town Meeting warrant articles**

#### **DPW (7D, 7G, 11A, 11B)**

John Walden, DPW Manager, appeared before the Committee to present these articles.

**7D.** Mr. Arnold noted that this article is to transfer \$50,000 from Water Retained Earnings to Water Enterprise funds, and \$50,000 from Sewer Retained Earnings to Sewer Enterprise funds. Mr. Walden had no further comments.

**7G.** Mr. Arnold noted that this article is a transfer regarding Chapter 90 road work. Mr. Walden explained that this is standard procedure. He is hoping that Chapter 90 funds will increase this year to \$900,000. The funds will be used for roadway maintenance, crack sealing, and re-surfacing of roadways. Mr. Walden noted that the road management plan includes a re-design and update of Adams St. which will cost around \$8 million. When performed, this project will involve widening the road to 30 ft, improvements to water mains, and adding a sidewalk. Ms. Lown felt that residents should have an opportunity to express their concerns regarding tree cutting and land-taking, and Mr. Walden noted that there would be public hearings before work begins. Mr. Johnson added that the final Chapter 90 number may not be known for town meeting.

**11A.** Mr. Arnold noted that this article is a transfer of \$420,000 for Water Tank work. Mr. Walden explained that the Ruggles St. water tank, constructed in 1987, last had its interior painted in 2003. A recent tank inspection revealed that the roof is now rusting, so re-painting is necessary. Mr. Walden hopes a bid in the range of \$294-317,000 will be available once funding is approved at town meeting. He estimates a cost of \$320,000 for the contract, \$50,000 for the inspection process (including on-going inspection during the performance of the work), plus 15% for contingency. Mr. Walden explained that the inspection ensures the paint is applied properly and evenly for maximum life. The Committee asked for information regarding the warranty on the 2003 work. Mr. Johnson noted that having an inspector on the Rte. 9 water tank project had saved the town money.

**11B.** Mr. Arnold noted that this article amends the wording of the ATM vote regarding the Water Abatement Trust. Mr. Walden felt Town Manager Jim Malloy could better explain this article.

Mr. Walden noted that **Article 21** is an attempt to change the language of the town bylaws slightly so that businesses with employee cafeterias are not charged the same fee as a restaurant for sewer connection.

Mr. Arnold noted that Mr. Malloy would be attending the April 14<sup>th</sup> meeting. He added that some articles may still be added to the warrant, which is planned to close April 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **Discussion of department budgets**

Mr. Arnold reviewed the budget spreadsheet showing the Committee votes to date. There was some discussion of the shortfall in Chief Gordon's budget due to a position being inadvertently left out of the FY2011 budget approved at the last Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Johnson noted that although Chief Gordon would try to cover the deficit from other budget lines, he may end up asking for a transfer at the end of this fiscal year if that becomes necessary.

Ms. Lown expressed concern about voting budgets before presentations by Mr. Malloy and the School Committee were concluded, or numbers finalized on the larger budgets. Mr. Arnold noted that Town Accountant Leah Talbot would be giving the Committee an update on end of Q3 receipts and expenses and a projection of the end of fiscal year receipts by mid-April. He added that the Committee had been voting only those departments for which there were no outstanding questions. Ms. Lown felt it was important to see the whole picture, and would prefer to wait for more definite numbers. She also would like Mr. Malloy to address the insurance budget, and review appropriations and revenues and actual expenditures. Mr. Arnold will send Mr. Malloy the spreadsheets Ms. Lown and Mr. Behn have prepared and the questions that have been raised by Committee members; he noted that the Committee is almost always acting on incomplete information to some extent and that the Committee can re-vote any recommendations at any time if a Committee member makes a motion to do so.

### **Deliberation/Voting on Department budget recommendations**

**Assabet.** Ms. Casemyr moves to recommend Assabet Valley Regional Vocational School Expenses of \$632,037. Ms. Casemyr noted that their building project has been pushed out to FY13 with more information expected for the Fall Special Town Meeting. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

**Assessors.** Regarding the questions on the Professional Services line item, Mr. Arnold noted that \$0 was spent last year, \$1,500 so far this year of the \$11,000 budget related to assessing commercial buildings and related Appellate Tax Board work. Each commercial assessment can cost \$5,000 or more, so the budget provides for 1-2 a year. Ms. Casemyr moves to recommend Salaries/Wages of \$230,513 and Expenses of \$14,899. Mr. Allen wondered how much contingency should remain in this budget, as opposed to coming to the Committee for transfer funds as the DPW does for Snow & Ice, but is prepared to vote in favor. Ms. Lown encouraged departments to trim their contingency amounts, and consider waiting for fall town meeting, or requesting departmental transfers in cases of emergency. Mr. Arnold noted that he will ask the Town Manager to explain his position on this line item when he attends the April 14 meeting. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is 8 in favor, 1 abstention (Lown), with 9 being present.

**Building department.** The Committee will wait to see if an article is put forward for the line item that appears to be one-time expenses.

**Council on Aging.** The Committee will wait to hear from Mr. Malloy.

**Cultural Council.** Ms. Casemyr moves to recommend Expenses of \$2,000. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is 8 in favor, 1 abstention (Johnson), with 9 being present.

**Debt Service.** Mr. Arnold noted that though this is a large budget, it does not have a lot of room for variance. Ms. Lown felt the numbers would be better closer to town meeting, and wanted to make sure there were not major differences between what has been estimated and what is actually appropriated. She pointed out that there could be further impacts on this budget from articles as well. No vote taken. Mr. Johnson noted that going back to FY06, every year 100% of principal has been spent; the largest amount left over has been \$280,000. Residents have been concerned about the increase in this line of nearly \$3 million, but Mr. Johnson pointed out that the majority is from the Wastewater Treatment Plant, of which

Westborough pays only 35%. Ms. Lown suggested Ms. Savignac draft an explanation to include in the booklet.

**DPW.** Vote deferred.

**Elections & Registration.** The Budget Background Information sheet was received from the Town Clerk. Ms. Casemyr moves to recommend Salaries/Wages of \$13,375 and Expenses of \$17,800. The motion is amended to Salaries/Wages - Elected of \$2,000, other Salaries/Wages of \$11,375, and Expenses of \$17,800. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

**Fire/ambulance.** Vote deferred.

**Health dept.** The Committee would like further detail on whether the treatment is necessary for health reasons, or simply for nuisance reduction. Mr. Behn is to provide Mr. Johnson with a question for Mr. McNulty.

**Historical Commission.** Mr. Behn moves to recommend Salaries/Wages of \$18,581 and Expenses of \$5,725. Mr. Tepper did not feel 15 hours/week was warranted. Ms. Casemyr felt 80% of this department's resources could be provided online, reducing the position to 6 hours/week. Ms. Lown noted that if the Committee intends to vote against this budget, the department should have the opportunity to respond. Mr. Behn withdraws his motion. No vote taken.

**Insurance.** Vote deferred.

**Legal.** Ms. Lown would like a breakdown on what is being paid for outside counsel. Mr. Tepper would like to see 5-7 years of what has been expended. Ms. Lown noted that the Assessor's office, Treasurer and the DPW also budget money for legal counsel, and would like to know the total amount spent for legal fees.

**Library, Police, School Department.** Vote deferred.

**Sewer enterprise.** Mr. Behn questioned the total cost of ownership in this budget (and other town budgets). He felt it was difficult for residents to understand the true cost of town services. Without a presentation of the accounting information that includes costs that come from other line items (e.g., insurance), it is difficult for residents to have the information necessary to make good decisions about services. Mr. Arnold noted that the booklet might include a discussion of services, total cost of ownership, for more informed voter recommendations. Ms. Casemyr moves to recommend Sewer Debt and Interest Expenses of \$804,727. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

**Sewer operations.** Ms. Casemyr moves to recommend Salaries/Wages of \$656,261 and Expenses of \$318,771. Mr. Behn was concerned about the Fuel and Oil line being sufficient. Mr. Johnson noted that though the numbers were not entirely accurate, a vote was warranted. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

**Sewer treatment plant.** Ms. Casemyr moves to recommend Wastewater Treatment Plant Salaries/Wages of \$15,000 and Expenses of \$4,105,200. Ms. Lown felt this budget contained too much contingency and should be voted in a lower amount at the Annual Town Meeting and, if necessary, changed at the Fall Town Meeting when more information (e.g., the CPI and PPI numbers that drive some of the contracted amounts) is available. Ms. Casemyr felt the estimates were reasonable, and that fall town meeting would be too late. Mr. Johnson noted that the Committee is responsible to come forward with a budget recommendation. Mr. Linnane felt it was a good estimate, and Mr. Allen added that the plant had been upfront about the CPI estimate of 4%. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is 8 in favor, 1 opposed (Lown), with 9 being present.

**Snow/Ice.** Ms. Casemyr moves to recommend DPW Snow & Ice Salaries/Wages of \$142,396 and Expenses of \$306,815. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

**Town Clerk.** Ms. Casemyr moves to recommend Salaries/Wages elected of \$84,617, Salaries/Wages of \$102,981, and Expenses of \$4,250. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

**Trustees of Soldiers Memorials.** Ms. Casemyr moves to recommend Expenses of \$2,800. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

**Water Enterprise.** Ms. Casemyr moves to recommend Water Debt and Interest Expenses of \$2,066,556. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

**Water Operations.** Ms. Casemyr moves to recommend Water Operations Salaries/Wages of \$514,160 and Expenses of \$1,839,716. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

**Zoning Board of Appeals.** Ms. Casemyr moves to recommend Salaries/Wages of \$12,304 and Expenses of \$1,540. Mr. Johnson noted that the Board should consider an application fee change to \$70 to cover the cost of the legal notice. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

#### **Review of upcoming meeting schedule**

Mr. Arnold noted the meetings scheduled for April 7, 11 and 14. Mr. Johnson felt meetings may be necessary during school vacation week.

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

Ms. Casemyr has requested enrollment information from the School Department.

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

Mr. Allen noted the very useful and instructive pie charts which were included in April's tax bills.

#### **Adjournment**

Ms. Casemyr moves to adjourn the meeting at 9:22 p.m. Vote to adjourn was 9 in favor, with 9 being present.

#### **Document List**

Appropriations, March 2011.

Budget Background Information sheet, Elections & Registration.

Budget Background Information sheet, Town Clerk.

EPA Mosquito Control information sheet.

Altosid Mosquito treatment information.