

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting No. 25, FY2011
April 7, 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

Ms. Lown had emailed corrections to the minutes, and had further questions. Mr. Johnson clarified his comments. Mr. Allen noted the correct spelling of "Transflo" on p. 2. Mr. Johnson moved to accept the minutes as amended. The vote to approve the minutes is 9 in favor, with 9 being present.

Meeting No. 23, March 31, 2011

Deferred until the next meeting.

AFC Preparations for Annual Town Meeting budget and article reviews

Discussion of department budgets

Historical Commission

Paula Skog, Historical Commission Chair, appeared to answer questions concerning her department's budget. Bill Gundling, Board Member, was also in attendance. Ms. Skog noted that her budget's largest line item, Other Professional Services, pays for preservation consultants hired to assist with gravestone preservation. Regarding the duties of the Commission's secretary, Ms. Skog explained that the office is open weekdays, 3 hrs/day. The secretary is available to explain the guidelines concerning signage in Westborough's historic districts. The secretary also handles demolition delay requests, and assists residents seeking information on restoring historic homes. The Commission is one of only 7 historical commissions in the state designated as an archaeological repository, so visitors also come into the office to do research. Ms. Skog pointed out that the department has reduced its budget by 37% since 2008, and the Commission would like to keep what's left. She added that the secretary is working on uploading more of the Commission's information online for greater public access.

Ms. Casemyr wondered if the secretary could be available by appointment. Ms. Skog noted that there have been complaints from visitors unable to come to the office in the morning when it is open. Mr. Arnold noted that a flexible schedule of some morning hours, plus appointments for those unable to come to the office in the morning, would perhaps be a more efficient system. Mr. Behn pointed out that reducing the hours may make it harder to find someone knowledgeable to fill the position. Mr. Tepper noted that departments typically factor in 52 weeks/year for each employee without taking into account vacation time and other days not worked. Mr. Arnold felt it was worth getting the Personnel Board's viewpoint on the issue of budgeting for the full 52 weeks for part-time employees even when it is known that some hours may not be used due to holidays, etc.

Deliberation/Voting on Department budget recommendations

The Committee reviewed the un-voted budgets.

Health Department. Mr. Arnold noted the additional information that had been received regarding mosquito control. Mr. Behn moves to recommend Salaries/Wages of \$265,040 and Expenses of \$12,800. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is 8 in favor, 1 opposed (Casemyr), with 9 being present. Ms. Casemyr felt the mosquito control increase was a “nice to have” rather than a necessary expense.

Legal Department. Mr. Arnold explained that Town Counsel Greg Franks still uses outside counsel for labor issues and tax board work. Ms. Lown would like more information about funds budgeted for legal counsel across other departments to get a better understanding of the overall cost of legal services to the Town.

Library. Mr. Behn moves to recommend Salaries/Wages of \$660,164 and Expenses of \$247,461. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present. Mr. Arnold noted that the state municipal appropriation requirement is based on what the town appropriates and not on what it allocates from other sources such as State Aid and trust funds. Therefore, he asked Mr. Behn to confirm with the Library Trustees that the amount of the Library budget that is planned to be raised and appropriated would meet the municipal appropriation requirement.

School Department. Ms. Casemyr reported that the School Committee had voted on their budget recommendation yesterday. She distributed the final numbers, which were all as recommended by the administration. She also provided the Committee with 5-year enrollment figures broken down by school and FTE, with Special Education separated out. She noted that contracts are still being negotiated.

Insurance. Ms. Lown had located the FY2010 Insurance budget spreadsheet prepared by Maryanne Bilodeau. She reviewed the spreadsheet she had revised in order to compare past years’ insurance expenditures. Mr. Johnson felt it would be helpful to find out from Asst. Town Manager Kristi Williams details on the billing cycle, in particular how much of the insurance budget has been expended so far this fiscal year.

**Discussion of Town Meeting warrant articles, including
Draft Warrant (3/3/11 version) Articles 2, 7, 13, 14**

Mr. Arnold reviewed the warrant summary spreadsheet to see which proponents will need to present to the Committee.

Article 7d, r/a \$300,000 for FinCom General Reserve Fund. There was some discussion about whether the scope of this article could be broadened to include transfers as well as Raise and Appropriate. Mr. Johnson noted that state law may require Raise and Appropriate for a reserve account. Ms. Lown moves to authorize changing the language of the article to “Raise and Appropriate or transfer,” provided it is legally allowed. The Committee revises the motion to change the language to “Raise and Appropriate or Transfer available funds”. The vote to approve the article language change is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

Article 8f, Forbes Municipal Building roof replacement. Mr. Arnold will ask Town Manager Jim Malloy to address this when he meets with the Committee next week.

Article 12, Energy Audit. There was some discussion as to why this article was being included, since it was defeated at the last town meeting. Town Planner Jim Robbins and Green Technology Advisory Committee Chair Leigh Emery will be asked to provide more information to the Committee.

Article 14, Tax Increment Financing Plan. The Committee will ask Mr. Malloy to address this with the Committee next week and will ask him to invite any Selectmen who may want to address this issue.

Article 15, Charter Corrections. Ms. Lown felt it would be helpful to include a history of Charter corrections as a note in the booklet.

Article 17, Open Space. Mr. Arnold noted that the Open Space Preservation Committee may want to speak to this article.

Article 18, Zoning. The Committee would like to have more information about which parcels are affected by this article. Mr. Allen will arrange for the Planning Board to present to the Committee.

Article 24, Insurance Amounts Over \$20,000. Ms. Casemyr's understanding was that Veolia were to cover the cost of repairing the clarifier; she will seek clarification.

Discuss Preparation of Report and Recommendations to Town Meeting

The Committee discussed the preparation of the town meeting booklet. Mr. Arnold suggested perhaps a subcommittee for developing spreadsheets, another to begin drafting the narrative. Ms. Lown was willing to prepare the recap spreadsheet for the booklet. She also noted that each liaison could prepare information relating to his/her department, to help divide the work. Ms. Casemyr distributed a list of items to consider for inclusion: revenue trends, unfunded mandates, decrease of state aid, debt obligations, etc. Mr. Johnson noted that the graphs which were included in the tax bills were very helpful and could be included.

Review of upcoming meeting schedule

Mr. Arnold noted the dates still available for meetings. The Committee will not meet on Monday, April 11. Mr. Arnold will try to arrange for Thursday's meeting (April 14) to begin at 6 p.m. as it will be a lengthy one.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

Ms. Casemyr noted that the Worcester Regional Research Bureau materials she had obtained at the Corridor Nine Chamber's Expo contained some good information which the Committee could discuss after town meeting.

Ms. Rosenblum Senie attended Mill Pond's Open House and congratulated them on being recognized as a National School of Character.

Mr. Tepper encouraged residents to attend the Harlem Ambassadors basketball game, a Rotary Club event to be held on Saturday, April 9th, at 7 p.m. Tickets are available at various sites in Town or at the door.

Adjournment

Ms. Casemyr moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m. Vote to adjourn was 9 in favor, with 9 being present.

Document List

2009 Insurance Line 5751 Breakdown, prepared by Ms. Lown

AFC Liaison Status spreadsheet, prepared by Mr. Arnold.

April 2009 Insurance Expenditure spreadsheet, prepared by Ms. Lown.

ATM Draft Warrant, from Town Manager Jim Malloy.

Extended Version of Town Accountant Leah Talbot's Insurance Spreadsheet, prepared by Ms. Lown and Mr. Behn.

Warrant Article Summary, prepared by Mr. Arnold.

Westborough Public Schools Enrollment spreadsheet, distributed by Ms. Casemyr.

For AFC Booklet list, prepared by Ms. Casemyr.