

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting No. 36, FY2011
June 27, 2011

Approved
July 11, 2011

Members Present: John E. Arnold, Chair, Brigitte Casemyr (7:30), Peter Allen, Bill Linnane, Jo Lown, Ed Behn, Jim Tepper (8:00), Kathy Rosenblum Senie, James J. Malone. Absent: None.

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

Arnold announced the re-appointments of Ms. Rosenblum Senie and Mr. Linnane to the Committee, and welcomed Mr. Malone who has been appointed to the Committee.

Call to Order/Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Approval of Minutes

Meeting No. 26, April 14, 2011

Mr. Linnane had emailed an amendment to the minutes. Ms. Lown moved to accept the minutes as amended. The vote to approve the minutes is 6 in favor, 1 abstention (Malone), with 7 being present.

Meeting No. 34, May 12, 2011

Ms. Lown moved to accept the minutes. The vote to approve the minutes is 5 in favor, 2 abstentions (Behn, Malone), with 7 being present.

Meeting No. 35, May 14, 2011

Ms. Lown moved to accept the minutes. The vote to approve the minutes is 5 in favor, 2 abstentions (Behn, Malone), with 7 being present.

Discuss/Vote on any Requests for Transfers or other Requests

Conservation Commission – Derek Saari

Derek Saari of the Conservation Commission appeared before the Committee to discuss his transfer request. Mr. Arnold noted that the request is for a transfer within the department, not a Reserve Fund transfer, to provide for the fitting up of office space for a new administrative assistant. Mr. Saari introduced Destiny Ashworth (check this name), the new assistant. He explained that the new space has no phone, cable, or electrical outlets, and the \$1,500 requested would bring the office to necessary standards. The space will also provide much-needed room for Building Department files. Mr. Saari noted that the 19 hrs/wk admin position was funded for 2011 but never filled; the former administrative assistant retired in August 2011. He added that the request was not brought to Town Meeting because the issue had only come up in the last few weeks.

Regarding the CSX public hearing scheduled for tomorrow evening, Mr. Saari noted that he had been working with CSX for 4 years on the culverts under the railroad on East Main St. and Lyman St. He told the Committee that CSX had done a good job addressing the Conservation Commission's concerns regarding drainage.

Mr. Behn moved to transfer the sum of \$1,500 from Conservation Commission Wages to Conservation Commission Expenses. The vote to approve the transfer is unanimous, 7 in favor with 7 being present.

Street Lights account

Mr. Arnold noted that this is a similar request for a transfer between departments. According to Leah Talbot, Town Accountant, a miscalculation was made this year in the Street Lights budget (which was addressed at

Town Meeting for next year); this request for \$7,000 will cover the amount remaining to be paid for street lights, transferred from Insurance Expenses. Mr. Behn moved to transfer \$7,000 from Insurance Expenses to Street Lights. The vote to approve the transfer is unanimous, 7 in favor with 7 being present.

DPW – John Walden

Mr. Arnold noted that this request is for a transfer from the Reserve Fund to Snow/Ice Wages in the amount of \$64,063.21, and to Snow/Ice Expenses in the amount of \$161,113.21. Mr. Behn moved to transfer from the Reserve Fund the sum of \$64,063.21 to Snow/Ice removal Wages. Mr. Behn also moved to transfer from the Reserve Fund the sum of \$161,113.21 to Snow/Ice removal Expenses. The vote to approve the transfer to Snow/Ice Wages is unanimous, 7 in favor with 7 being present. The vote to approve the transfer to Snow/Ice Expenses is unanimous, 7 in favor with 7 being present.

Review/Discussion of Annual Town Meeting

General review/discussion

Mr. Arnold distributed notes from Town Manager Jim Malloy regarding Town Meeting. Mr. Malloy had suggested changing the bylaws to avoid having to vote on Article 2 at every Town Meeting. Mr. Arnold noted that Mr. Malloy's bylaw amendment gives the Board of Selectmen the responsibility for making the recommendation. He felt it would be more appropriate for the Finance Committee to fill that role, as an advisory board accustomed to balancing the needs of all the Town's departments.

The Committee in general noted the many positive comments received regarding the Finance Committee's booklet prepared for Town Meeting. Ms. Casemyr was disappointed more voters were not present and suggested making the extra booklets available in the Town Clerk's office.

Mr. Allen noted Mr. Malloy's comments regarding free cash, and would like further discussion in order to reach some kind of agreement. Mr. Malone added that with Town Meeting shifting to March, there would be even less certainty regarding Beacon Hill, and felt that limiting funding options was not a good idea.

The Committee discussed the Town Web site's posting of information on Town Meeting (for example, a list of actions taken). Mr. Behn felt that all such information should be in one place for easy reference.

Ms. Lown distributed information regarding GASB Fund Balance reserves, which UMAS is adopting. She noted the surplus and Reserve Fund data, and explained that each year the Town puts money in reserve, which if not used becomes surplus. The list of how much is in reserve is in the Town Meeting Annual Report. Mr. Arnold felt that this would be a useful discussion for a July/August meeting. Mr. Malone encouraged Committee members to sign up to receive information from City & Town Web site. Mr. Behn added that MMA also has an R&S feed with legislative information.

Mr. Arnold noted Mr. Malloy's suggestion that providing the Finance Committee booklet to voters at Town election would allow them more time to look over the information; however, it would be difficult to get the booklet done that much earlier, and costly to print that many copies. Joe Harrington, Town Moderator, suggested emailing the booklet to every member of every Town committee, as a subset of those most concerned with Town Meeting issues.

Ideas for topics/notes to be considered for Special Town Meeting Report & Recommendations

Mr. Arnold felt that the key issues were to continue to show where we are now and how we got there, to provide numbers and narrative, and address areas of research (GASB, etc.). He would like the Board of Selectmen to provide a budget schedule and to include the Committee in the process. He noted that sending the Committee's questions through Mr. Malloy might be helpful to departments.

Ms. Casemyr added that the Town's financial team plans out the budget process each year, and felt it would be helpful for the Committee to be involved in this a little sooner, even as a silent observer.

Ms. Lown felt the Committee should think about whether to put forth a stabilization article at Fall Town Meeting. She was not in favor of Mr. Malloy's suggestion regarding Article 2.

Mr. Behn noted the Committee's role of providing accurate information, citing the media's message to voters that the percentage budget increase was 4.3% rather than the actual 8.8%.

Mr. Arnold noted that Town Assessor Linda Swadel would be meeting with the Committee earlier in the process.

Mr. Behn thanked the Committee for their work on the booklet.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Arnold noted that Administrative Assistant Julie Sams' Employee Evaluation had been completed. The July meeting agenda will include voting on Committee officers, as well as GASB. A Legislative Committee liaison is needed. He has a copy of laws relating to municipal finance and taxation for those interested. The next meeting is scheduled for July 11th at 7 p.m.

Mr. Behn noted that he and Ms. Rosenblum Senie had attended NOFF and found it a good experience.

Ms. Lown noted that she is looking forward to improving the Committee's workbook with the help of Mr. Malone, who was one of its originators.

Mr. Linnane attended the Wastewater Treatment Plant meeting and explained that there may be safety issues now with Clarifier #2; if so, it would require a dome-type cover. The borrowing for this extra expense would result in an increase to the taxpayer.

Mr. Allen noted that he was very impressed with the work the Conservation Commission and Transflo are doing together in Westborough's interest. He also encouraged residents to attend Westborough's town-wide block party, to be held Friday night, 6-10 p.m.

Mr. Arnold noted that all liaisons would be in place as soon as possible, and encouraged members to think about their areas of interest. Mr. Linnane noted that it might be useful for some members to continue on in the same department, for continuity.

Adjournment

Ms. Casemyr moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. Vote to adjourn was 9 in favor, with 9 being present.

Document List

Moderator's Appointments 2011, sent by Joe Harrington.

May 2011 Appropriation Report, prepared by Leah Talbot.

Notes of Post-Town Meeting Review, May 24, 2011, prepared by Joe Harrington.

DPW Snow Budget Update.

Town Meeting comments from Jim Malloy.

Massachusetts Dept. of Revenue Bulletin: GASB 54 Fund Balance Account Crosswalk, provided by Jo Lown.