

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting No. 6, FY2012
September 26, 2011

Approved
October 6, 2011

Members Present: John E. Arnold, Chair, Ed Behn, Peter Allen, Bill Linnane, Jo Lown, Jim Tepper (7:30 p.m.), Kathy Rosenblum Senie, J. J. Malone, Lisa Blazejewski (7:15 p.m.). 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. 04, September 19, 2011 – deferred.

Meeting No. 05, September 22, 2011 – deferred.

AFC Preparations for Special Town Meeting

Discussion/deliberation/voting of STM Warrant Article recommendations

Mr. Arnold noted that the draft final copy of the Town Meeting warrant has been made available and will be approved by the Board of Selectmen at their meeting tomorrow night. The only change from the last version is in the wording of the Library HVAC article (Article 11), to make it more flexible. Mr. Arnold distributed a packet of information from the School Department relating to their request for a truck. Mr. Linnane also has provided some information from the DPW on their vehicle request.

Mr. Arnold noted that the warrant had been discussed with the Town Manager, and suggested the Committee review the warrant and either vote or note where more information is required.

Article 1. Rule of the Meeting. Ms. Lown moved to recommend the Town so vote. She felt it made sense to establish within the bylaws a procedure which has been part of every Town Meeting, but hoped it would still be brought to the attention of the voters by the Town Moderator. Mr. Malone queried whether the change to the bylaws was subject to the approval of the Attorney General. Ms. Lown will look into this point. The vote to approve the article recommendation is unanimous, 7 in favor with 7 being present.

Article 2. Building & Grounds Budget Transfer. Mr. Behn moved to recommend the Town so vote. The vote to approve the article recommendation is 6 in favor, 1 abstention (Lown), with 7 being present.

Article 3. Central Purchasing Expenses. Ms. Lown would like to look at the Central Purchasing expenditures from prior years, to see what overages there were, if any. No vote taken.

Article 4. Fire Department Budget. Mr. Behn moved to recommend the town so vote. Ms. Lown noted that this article is a raise and appropriate. The vote to approve the article recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

Article 5. Fuel Management System. Ms. Lown would like more time to look through the literature on the Fuelmaster system. No vote taken.

Article 6. DPW Plow Truck. Mr. Arnold noted that this article requests a transfer from Free Cash, and that language would need to be included in the Committee's motion about not increasing the size of the Town's fleet of vehicles. Mr. Behn felt the 5% penalty for waiting two months to respond to the original quote was a bit high. Mr. Linnane will seek more information from DPW Manager John Walden. No vote taken.

Article 7. Building Department Vehicle. Ms. Lown noted that the updated list of all Town vehicles had not been received by the Committee. Mr. Behn felt there was an obvious need for this vehicle and wanted to act on this request. Ms. Lown noted that the Board of Selectmen had yet to approve the warrant and that no real delay was involved in not voting on this issue tonight. Mr. Behn moved to transfer from Free Cash and appropriate the sum of \$20,000 for the purposes of this article, and that the size of the Town's vehicle fleet will not increase due to this purchase. The vote to approve the article recommendation was 7 in favor, 2 abstaining (Lown, Tepper), with 9 being present.

Article 8. Building Department Stipend. Ms. Lown would like to defer voting on this article until an updated recap spreadsheet is received from Town Accountant Leah Talbot, in order to determine where in the budget the funds will fall, whether Salaries and Wages, or Expenses. No vote taken.

Article 9. National Citizen Survey. Mr. Arnold had done some research online and thought Town Manager Jim Malloy's information regarding sample size seemed correct. Although influenced by the Town Manager's advocacy of the survey, Mr. Allen felt \$10,000 was a significant number and would prefer to wait until the Board of Selectmen review this article before voting. Mr. Behn noted that Mr. Malloy was going to check if schools were represented in the survey. Mr. Allen wanted to know who would be responsible for drafting the extra questions, and felt perhaps the schools could be included that way. Mr. Behn will follow-up, and will also find out a more exact number of the sample size. Ms. Rosenblum Senie stated that she would like discussion of the article to take into account the recommendation by the Town Manager that the survey be conducted every two years, so there is a likelihood that this will be a recurring expense. Mr. Tepper was concerned with the presumption that this would be an annual expense. There was some discussion about how the sample population would be selected, and if the sample would be demographically diverse enough. Also, residents without landlines could be excluded from the survey if the phone book was used to compile the sample. Mr. Arnold urged Committee members to begin drafting their concerns regarding this article. No vote taken.

Article 10. Insurance Proceeds. Ms. Lown moved to recommend the Town so vote. The vote to approve the article recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

Article 11. Library HVAC System. Mr. Arnold noted that the wording of the article is now very broad, with no bound on amount or how the money is to be raised, in order to accommodate all possible permutations of the project. The Committee will monitor the situation and perhaps make a recommendation on Town Meeting floor. No vote taken.

Article 12. School Department Vehicle. Mr. Arnold noted the memorandum from the Westborough Public Schools regarding the truck request. There was some discussion of the differences between this vehicle and the one being requested by the DPW. Ms. Rosenblum Senie wondered why the School Department needed a plow truck which was more equipped than the DPW's. Mr. Arnold noted that the school truck was to be used for heavy hauling, and Ms. Lown added that the risk of personal injury from lifting heavy loads into the bed of a standard pickup would be even more costly than spending more on this vehicle. Man-hours would also be saved, when moving sand or gravel for landscaping, for example. Ms. Blazejewski noted that this would also reduce the school's dependence on contractors, another cost-savings. Mr. Arnold noted that the Committee would like to see the cost savings of this purchase, and also expected that future purchases of this type would go through the Capital Expenditures Planning Committee. Mr. Linnane is to arrange for Brian Schlegel, School Department Building & Grounds Manager, to come before the Committee to answer questions. No vote taken.

Article 13. Prior Year's Bill. Mr. Behn moved to transfer from Free Cash and appropriate the sum of \$2,240 for the purposes of this article. Mr. Arnold noted that the circumstances of this expense are very

unusual given the time that passed between the course being taken and the grade for the course being released. However, it has been explained that the delay was not through any fault of the student and that the Personnel Board could not approve the request until the grade had been received. The vote to approve this article recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

Article 14. Rescinding Excess Debt Authorization. Ms. Lown moved to recommend the Town so vote. The vote to approve the article recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

Article 15. Town Sewer System. Mr. Linnane distributed copies of an "Implementation Plan" prepared by Town Engineer Carl Balduf. He explained that a portion of the planned work was carried out in FY11, and now funds are being requested for the plan's completion. A total of 64 homes will be impacted. Mr. Arnold noted that more detail was needed regarding the borrowing, as well as the wording of the motion so the Committee's recommendation would correspond. Mr. Allen felt the Town Engineer should be ready to explain to the residents of Upton Road why they are being excluded from this project. There was some discussion as to whether this project would in fact bring the Town sewer system up to 80% coverage, as Mr. Malloy had indicated. Mr. Behn felt it was important to understand the yearly cost of this borrow, and the total cost over the life of the borrow. No vote taken.

Other STM topics/upcoming meeting schedule

Mr. Arnold noted that around five articles required more discussion. A meeting will be posted for Thursday, as well as Monday and Thursday of the following week.

Discussion of AFC input at start of FY13 Budget/Annual Town Meeting process

Mr. Arnold noted that Mr. Malloy had indicated understanding the pressures on taxpayers and how the property tax affects that pressure. Mr. Arnold asked the Committee to consider what their comments prior to beginning this year's Annual Town Meeting preparation would be, keeping in mind that Mr. Malloy's budget message to department heads goes out on or around October 15th. Mr. Malone indicated support for the inclusion of a statement about how the Committee felt about limiting the increase in tax bills and that the 2 1/2% increase mentioned in the draft could be a possible goal. Mr. Allen felt that Mr. Malloy had sufficiently heard his comments, as well as those of taxpayers, and wasn't sure there was time to agree on a specific message. Mr. Linnane thought a message might be prepared for Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Behn felt there was a benefit to putting in writing the concerns of the Committee regarding tax increases, and that the message should be town-wide, not just to departments. He noted that Mr. Malloy had alluded to schools as being a significant part of the budget, and felt there were variable costs in that budget in addition to fixed costs. Ms. Lown supported putting in writing a general consensus on various points, rather than specific detail. Ms. Rosenblum Senie felt Mr. Malloy had heard the Committee's input, but was not comfortable with suggesting that any tax increase be limited to a certain percentage, without knowing the impact that limitation would have. Mr. Tepper also felt Mr. Malloy had heard the Committee's message, and added that fiscally the Town was at a point where it must constrain, and those constraints could no longer be deferred. Ms. Blazejewski noted that Mr. Malloy was not the only one who needed to hear the Committee's concerns, and felt a written message would provide clarity and prevent misunderstanding. Mr. Arnold noted the difficulty of coming up with a perfect statement, and encouraged each Committee member to consider drafting their own comments or thinking about what they would want to see in a written statement so the Committee can decide whether it can reach a consensus or not. Mr. Behn added that such a statement could be included as a preface within the Special Town Meeting booklet.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Arnold noted that the Board of Selectmen meeting is tomorrow. He has registered Mr. Behn, Ms. Rosenblum Senie and Ms. Blazejewski for the October 15th meeting of the Association of Town Finance Committees.

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Ms. Rosenblum Senie reminded residents of the upcoming Arts in Common event being held Saturday, October 1st, from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Bay State Common.

Adjournment

Mr. Behn 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 Requests Assignments FY2012.

AFC Liaison Role FY2012.

Consolidated Fiscal Management Policies (with comments by John Arnold) as sent to the Town Manager.

Fall 2011 Town Meeting Final Warrant, 9-23-11.

STM Articles Oct. 2011 spreadsheet.

School Department vehicle information handout.

DPW “Implementation Plan” Sewer Project handout.