

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting No. 9, FY2012
October 6, 2011

Approved
October 13, 2011

Members Present: John E. Arnold, Chair, Ed Behn, Peter Allen, Jo Lown, Jim Tepper, Kathy Rosenblum Senie, J. J. Malone, Lisa Blazejewski. Absent: Bill Linnane.

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.

Mr. Arnold noted that no new information is available regarding the Library HVAC. The Committee will make their recommendation on Town Meeting floor.

Approval of Minutes

Meeting No. 06, September 26, 2011

Mr. Malone and Ms. Rosenblum Senie had emailed corrections to the minutes. Ms. Lown moved to accept the minutes as amended. The vote to approve the minutes is 8 in favor with 8 being present.

Meeting No. 07, September 29, 2011

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

AFC Preparations for Special Town Meeting

Discussion/deliberation/voting of STM Warrant Article recommendations

Mr. Arnold proposed a goal for the meeting of voting on an approved draft of the Committee's Report & Recommendation. To this end, the Committee reviewed the articles and draft report for final voting.

Article 7. Building Department Vehicle. Mr. Allen was in favor of re-voting on this article, provided the previous abstentions were only due to the need for more information. Mr. Allen moved to recommend the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$20,000 from Free Cash for the purpose of this article, and that the size of the Town's vehicle fleet will not increase because of this purchase. The vote to approve the article recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

Article 9. Survey. Mr. Tepper moved to recommend the Town defeat this article. Mr. Tepper felt there was conflicting information regarding this survey, and was not comfortable with committing to an annual expense. Mr. Malone clarified the two different numbers which had been quoted for sample sizes: 1200 being the number of residents who will be surveyed, and 384 being the number actually required for statistical validity. Mr. Tepper felt the expense was not warranted at this time. The vote to approve the defeat of this article is 2 in favor, 6 opposed (Allen, Behn, Arnold, Lown, Senie, Blazejewski), with 8 being present. Mr. Allen moved to recommend the Town so vote. The vote to approve the article recommendation is 6 in favor, 2 opposed (Tepper, Malone), with 8 being present.

Article 11. Library HVAC. Mr. Arnold noted that the Library Trustees had still not received the final Engineer's report. The Board of Selectmen will be making their recommendation on Town Meeting floor, as will the Committee.

Article 12. School Vehicle. Mr. Tepper felt the School Department had implied there might be other means within its budget to purchase this vehicle. Mr. Arnold noted the Committee has at least two

choices when making its recommendation: approve the article and transfer funds from Free Cash to purchase this vehicle, over and above what is in the School Department's budget—or, defeat the article, in the belief that the School Committee should buy this vehicle with funds they have already been allocated through Town Meeting. Mr. Tepper moved to recommend the Town defeat this article. There was some discussion about whether the article provided enough funds for the request. Ms. Blazejewski noted that the snow plow attachment was not part of the article request, but rather was to be provided for through the school's budget process. The sidewalk sanding attachment which had been mentioned was also not part of the article request. Mr. Arnold felt the mention of these potential attachments had perhaps caused some confusion. The vote to recommend defeat of this article is 1 in favor, 7 against (Malone, Allen, Behn, Arnold, Lown, Senie, Blazejewski), with 8 being present. Mr. Behn moved to recommend the Town vote to transfer the sum of \$45,000 from Free Cash for the purpose of this article, and that the Town's vehicle fleet will not increase because of this purchase. The vote to approve the article recommendation is 7 in favor, 1 against (Tepper), with 8 being present.

Article 15. Sewer. Ms. Lown noted that this particular motion had specific language provided by Bond Counsel. Ms. Lown moved to recommend the Town vote to approve the motion as stated in the draft of 10-3-11. The vote to approve the article recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

The Committee reviewed the remainder of the report. Mr. Arnold explained that there were two parts to the Committee's message to voters: the part dealing with Special Town Meeting, and the "Looking Ahead" part. He noted that Ms. Rosenblum Senie had provided a more streamlined version of the message, and the Committee agreed to use this version as a starting point in their discussion.

Mr. Tepper felt it needed to be clearer in the report that, though the Town has little or no control over some parts of its revenue stream (State and Federal aid, etc.), it does have control over its expenses and these expenses have a significant impact on the tax bill. There was further discussion about whether the Committee should set a goal of a certain spending level. The Committee eventually agreed on the view that the pattern of 5-3/4% average annual increases in the single family tax bill is unsustainable. Ms. Senie felt the Committee should have answers prepared for residents who agree spending should be decreased and want to know what their options are.

Mr. Behn moved that the Advisory Finance Committee accept the Report & Recommendation as amended tonight, with the provision that minor changes in typographical, formatting and math calculation errors may be made by Mr. Arnold and Mr. Behn. The vote to accept the report is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

Upcoming meeting schedule

Mr. Arnold will post a meeting for Thursday (10/13) in case the Library Trustees receive the Engineer's report on the HVAC system.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Arnold noted that, as the deadline for departments to submit their budgets is November 7th, the Committee members will want to begin meetings with the departments to which they are liaison soon after Special Town Meeting. He added that, if possible, members should be scheduling introductory meetings with their assigned departments between now and Thanksgiving, and gathering impressions on how the various departments are approaching the budget process. Mr. Tepper felt it was unfortunate that the goal in the Town Manager's initial budget request to the department heads was level services rather than a level budget, and that department heads may not be getting the message of our concern with regard to increases in the tax bill. Mr. Behn noted that, as liaisons, Committee members have the opportunity to take their message to each department.

Ms. Rosenblum Senie noted that the Board of Selectmen had appointed a subcommittee to look into State Hospital re-use, and wondered if she should be a liaison to that subcommittee. Other members are George Thompson (Selectman), Ian Johnson (Selectman), Jim Robbins (Town Planner), Jim Malloy (Town Manager), Earl Storey (Open Space Preservation Committee), and Gary Kessler (Conservation Commission). The subcommittee is to negotiate with the State Department Capital Management Department about the future of Westborough. Mr. Arnold suggested that Ms. Rosenblum Senie follow up with the Selectmen on the Committee and the Town Manager to indicate that she is the Committee liaison to that effort and would like to stay up-to-date with their activities.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

Mr. Allen noted the two important dates referred to in the draft Budget memo from Town Manager Jim Malloy: a School Budget public meeting on December 14, 2011; and the joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen, the Advisory Finance Committee and the Capital Expenditure Planning Committee, on January 10, 2012.

Mr. Arnold asked Ms. Rosenblum Senie to get the School Committee meeting schedule; they will then work out a plan to attend the meetings.

Ms. Lown noted that the notification of Free Cash approval was in the Free Cash Summary email.

Adjournment

Mr. Behn moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 p.m. Vote to adjourn was 8 in favor, with 8 being present.

Document List

Draft STM Report & Recommendation, prepared by John Arnold.

Initial Budget memo, sent by Jim Malloy.

Looking Ahead to Town Meeting, prepared by Kathy Rosenblum Senie.