

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting No. 14, FY2012
January 5, 2012

Approved
January 12, 2012

Members Present: John E. Arnold, Chair, Ed Behn, Peter Allen, Bill Linnane, Jo Lown, Jim Tepper, Kathy Rosenblum Senie, J. J. Malone, Lisa Blazejewski (7:50 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. 13, December 5, 2011

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

AFC Preparations for Special Town Meeting article reviews

Follow up on topics from meeting with Selectmen

Features and format of budget spreadsheet

Mr. Arnold noted that following the discussion at the last AFC meeting, Mr. Behn had forwarded the suggestions the Committee had discussed to Town Manager Jim Malloy. Due to the significant changes being suggested and little time to fully implement them, Mr. Malloy indicated that he would review them and discuss them with Mr. Behn after the current budget cycle. So the Committee can begin using the data in the suggested format, Mr. Behn noted that if Mr. Malloy could provide details in machine-readable form, that data could be plugged into the spreadsheets he has prepared. Ms. Lown added that it would be helpful if detail from Mr. Malloy's 5-year plan spreadsheets in the Budget booklet could also be provided in electronic form.

AFC input to Town Meeting info that may be provided to voters at Town Election

Mr. Arnold noted that, in general, the Committee thinks providing Town Meeting information to voters at the Town election is a good idea. Town Moderator Joe Harrington explained that he plans to prepare a hand-out informing voters of the time and place of Town Meeting, as well as where to find a copy of the warrant online. Mr. Arnold added that the Committee could provide a summary of the AFC meeting schedule and information on where and when the AFC Report will be available.

Discussion of FY2013 Budget Booklet

Questions/Topics for 1/10/2012 Joint meeting with Selectmen

Mr. Arnold noted that the final Capital Expenditures report would be available at Tuesday's joint meeting. He called the Committee's attention to the FY2013 Revenue & Expenditure Estimates handout from Mr. Malloy, particularly the breakdown of increases based on Town Departments, Debt, Insurance, School Department, etc. Mr. Arnold felt this provided a useful high-level view of the overall impact of budget increases, adding that the 3.7% overall increase is higher than he'd hoped.

Areas/Topics of focus during upcoming AFC meetings

Mr. Arnold welcomed Committee members' thoughts on how best to allocate their time in the coming weeks before Town Meeting. Mr. Allen noted Mr. Malloy's five-year forecast for the single-family tax bill, and would like to get a better understanding of the forecasting model used for those projections. Mr. Behn would like to see the Insurance number broken down between school and Town departments. He

noted that the school is the Town's largest employer, and felt breaking down the Insurance was a fairer way to see the total cost of education, and the relative increase. Mr. Tepper felt that, although the impact of Debt is out of the Town's control, it would still be helpful to have information relating to the Town's Debt. Ms. Lown noted the Municipal Building project as outlined in an earlier report from the Municipal Building Committee, which may be coming onto the warrant, and warned it would have a significant impact on the budget. Mr. Arnold was pleased to note that Town department line item budgets were going up 1.5% which seems to indicate that, at the department level, efforts are being made to control costs. Ms. Rosenblum Senie would like Mr. Malloy to address his plan for unfunded liabilities when he meets with the Committee.

Mr. Arnold reminded the Committee of their Joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen and the Capital Expenditure Planning Committee, Tuesday, January 10th, at 7:00 p.m.

Ideas/suggestions for improvements to our process

Mr. Arnold encouraged members to consider which budgets may require little discussion, as those departments may not need to meet with the Committee. Mr. Allen suggested that, at a future meeting, it could be useful for the Committee to identify departments for which the Committee definitely has questions by walking through the budgets and noting Committee members' thoughts about the need to meet with them. Mr. Arnold said this would be put on the agenda of the next meeting. Mr. Behn noted that Mr. Malloy's report did a nice job of highlighting Town departments' accomplishments. Ms. Lown added that there were four staffing issues in the report which the Committee may want to address.

Other Advisory Finance Committee topics

Schedule of Meetings planned for Jan.-Mar. 2012

Mr. Arnold noted that there would be meetings every Monday and Thursday from now through Town Meeting on March 17th, with the exception of January 9 and January 16 (MLK) and, perhaps, the February school vacation week. The decision on whether to meet during February school vacation will be made at a later time.

Scheduling departments for budget discussions

Mr. Arnold encouraged members to have their departments get in touch with the Administrative Assistant soon to schedule their presentations. As noted above, he will schedule time at the next meeting to briefly review all department budgets to get a sense of which budgets the Committee doesn't require further information at this time. Ms. Lown noted that as soon as the draft warrant is available, departments can be scheduled to discuss warrant articles.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Arnold reminded the Committee that all Town employees must take an ethics test, which is to be renewed every two years. There is to be a review of the initial draft of the Town Meeting warrant after the budget presentation at next Tuesday's meeting. A Massachusetts Taxpayer Foundation financial data booklet is available for those interested. The Massachusetts Municipal Association annual meeting is being held in Boston, January 20-21. A detailed preliminary budget recommendation from the Assabet Valley school district is available. The January 2012 issue of the Beacon (Massachusetts Municipal Association publication) is also available.

Mr. Malone noted that he and Mr. Linnane had met with Jack Goodhall, Engineer Administrator of the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) board, and with Mike Stanton, Chair of the WWTP board. They also met with the DPW. Mr. Linnane added that the DPW have done an excellent job clearing up their budget lines.

Mr. Allen noted that the Conservation Commission has asked for additional expense money. This has been approved by the Town Manager but they will be coming before the Committee soon to answer any questions. Ms. Lown wanted to know how the logging at Sandra Pond was being funded.

Mr. Linnane noted that the Building Commissioner's budget is almost ready for review.

Mr. Behn will be arranging for Town Treasurer/Collector Joanne Savignac to meet with the Committee to speak to the debt. He also plans to ask Mr. Malloy for the breakdown on insurance.

Mr. Arnold noted that the Assabet Valley School committee will need to present to the Committee regarding their budget and the warrant article related to a repair/renovation project at the school.

Ms. Lown informed the Committee that the Fire Department Salaries Overtime line for the current fiscal year (FY2012) has a \$13,000 deficit due to the extreme summer and fall storms. Fire Chief Walter Perron plans to make this up with reductions in training and other areas. The June tornado, Hurricane Irene, and the October 31 snowstorm cost the department \$370,000. Also, Ms. Lown would like to follow-up on the Municipal Building project. If it is going forward, she feels a notice should be published in the newspaper and a public meeting held about it, as it will be a significant construction project. Mr. Tepper noted that, according to the Town Manager's budget book summary, the Town will indeed be asked to fund a building project involving the Forbes building, Fire Department, and Town Hall.

Ms. Rosenblum Senie wanted to follow-up on the Assabet Valley .pdf being available on the Town's website, as well as their public presentation.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

Ms. Lown noted residents' negative comments on the increases of their new quarterly tax bills; she has encouraged them to speak out at Town Meeting. Mr. Tepper encouraged residents to attend AFC meetings to get their comments in even earlier. Ms. Lown also felt strongly that a public meeting should be held regarding the proposed Municipal Building project. Mr. Linnane noted that the Town will spend considerable resources on renovations and maintenance of existing buildings, whether the project goes forward or not.

Adjournment

Mr. Behn moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. Vote to adjourn was 9 in favor, with 9 being present.

Document List

Department Liaison worksheet.
AFC Liaison Requests Assignments FY2012.
Appropriations Report December 2011.
Building & Grounds Department Liaison worksheet.
Consolidated Fiscal Management Policies, 11-8-11.
AFC minutes of 1-24-11.
School Department Liaison worksheet.
Treatment Plant Board Department Liaison worksheet.