

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee  
Minutes of Meeting No. 23, FY2012  
February 13, 2012

Approved  
February 20, 2012

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

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. 21, February 6, 2012**

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

#### **Meeting No. 22, February 9, 2012**

Ms. Rosenblum Senie and Mr. Tepper requested corrections to the minutes. Mr. Behn moved to accept the minutes as amended. The vote to approve the minutes is 7 in favor and 1 abstention (Linnane), with 8 being present.

### **Preparation for FY2013 Annual Town Meeting**

#### **Planning Board/Town Planner (Budget & Zoning Articles)**

Jim Robbins, Town Planner, appeared before the Committee to present these articles.

**Article 17. Traffic Consultant (\$4,500).** Mr. Robbins explained that this article would provide funds for the Planning Board to acquire the services of a Planning Consultant to design traffic review standards, which would then be used for site plan reviews and traffic reports. He noted the difficulties of preparing traffic reports for different sites with no uniform standards to follow. He added that having established standards would help avoid incurring legal costs if site plans are denied and appealed.

**Article 30. Zoning Bylaw Change (36 West Main St.).** Mr. Robbins explained that the Baptist church next to Town Hall, zoned Single Family Residential, has been on the market for two years. The Planning Board feels this property should be re-zoned Downtown Business, allowing commercial use of the building. Rezoning could also increase the commercial tax base, and would bring the property into line with the surrounding properties, most of which are also zoned Downtown Business. Mr. Robbins noted that any proposed renovations would have to undergo site plan review, which would include consideration of parking issues. A public hearing has been held and the Planning Board has approved the change unanimously. The building is within the State Historic District, which would require that the exterior be preserved.

**Article 31. Zoning Bylaw Change (44-46 East Main St.).** Mr. Robbins explained that this lot is currently split-zoned, with the front Downtown Business and the back Residential, although it is a single parcel. The Planning Board feels making the lot Downtown Business in its entirety will increase its value and the options for its future use. He noted that the requirement of a 100 ft. buffer zone between businesses and residential areas makes the back portion of this lot currently unusable. A public hearing has been held and the Planning Board has approved the change. Mr. Linnane felt this was a good move, and noted that the Town had lost valuable tax revenue in the past when businesses were unable to fully utilize their site.

**Article 32. Downtown Planning Overlay District extension.** Mr. Robbins explained that the current zoning limits a building on one lot to a single use. Extending the overlay district would allow property owners to have other options for the use of their property. Mr. Robbins noted that this type of zoning is typical for a downtown district, where there is a mix of uses (e.g., apartments above stores), and is consistent with what is already in the overlay district. This change would only impact parcels with a frontage on West Main Street and does not apply to properties that are currently zoned as residential. There was some discussion of how this would affect the value of these properties.

**Assabet Valley Regional Technical School (budget & article)**

Mr. Arnold had received notice from Town Manager Jim Malloy that Westborough's assessment for FY2013 was now \$686,163. Paul George, Westborough's Representative on the Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School Committee, Mary Jo Nawrocki, Superintendent-Director, and Pat Collins, Business Manager, appeared before the Committee to present this budget and related articles. Ms. Nawrocki noted that 41 students from Westborough attend Assabet, with a total school population of 1100. The school's budget is \$17.6 million, up 1.7% from last year. Westborough's required minimum contribution (according to established regional school budget calculations) is \$659,305, but additional funds for transportation and capital equipment bring the total to \$686,636, an 8.5% increase from last year.

Mr. Malone noted the 7.59% overall increase in their budget, and Ms. Nawrocki explained that Chapter 70 funds are distributed based on a foundation budget formula. The foundation budget formula had increased 8.7%, resulting in increased assessments. Mr. Allen asked if contracting out custodial services had been considered, and Ms. Nawrocki noted that Assabet, with three custodial shifts due to night school, did not lend itself to that option. Mr. Behn noted that the cost per student was higher than even Westborough schools, and Mr. Collins pointed out that class sizes in workshops were limited for safety reasons to 14-17 students. Mr. George added that providing up-to-date, relevant equipment for the students to learn on was expensive but necessary. Mr. Arnold felt the Assabet Committee should be ready at Town Meeting to explain the total assessment increase of 8.5% though Westborough's number of students has only increased by 1 and the overall budget increase is 1.7%.

**Article 14. Assabet Building Project.** Ms. Nawrocki explained that the Assabet Valley school is 39 years old. This project will include replacing the HVAC system, upgrading windows, doors, plumbing and lighting, and bringing the school into ADA compliance. The original estimate for the project was \$70 million but this has been reduced to \$62.4 million. The Assabet Committee has met with the local ADA board and the state and have acquired significant variances from them. Mr. Arnold noted that Mr. Malloy feels Westborough's portion of this project can be done within the existing levy capacity. Mr. Malone pointed out that this action is estimated to add approximately 5 cents to the tax rate. In answer to Mr. Linnane's question about whether the work could be done piecemeal, Mr. Collins answered that the Massachusetts School Building Authority, which has granted \$33 million to the project, wants to see the work done in a cost-effective manner and would not support a piecemeal approach. He added that Assabet's building systems are so inter-connected that it was not feasible to carry out the work separately.

**Personnel Board (budget & article)**

Bob Titus, Personnel Board Chair, appeared before the Committee to present this budget and related articles. Also present were Jim Parker, Kathy Wilfert, and Sue Abladian of the Personnel Board. Mr. Titus noted that the budget of \$32,500 was composed of two parts: Firefighters Educational Training (\$30,000), and Sickleave Buyback (\$2,500). He added that, in future years, there is expected to be a significant decrease in the training line as more employees complete their degrees. Mr. Arnold wanted to check if Mr. Malloy had recommended this budget request since the expense amount differs from the recommendation noted in the budget notebook.

In answer to Ms. Rosenblum Senie's question about how the figure for college tuition was determined, Mr. Titus explained that the Committee uses an average of area college tuition rates. Ms. Wilfert noted that the degree pursued must be work-related. She added that the Board has been re-evaluating how the educational reimbursement number is derived, in an attempt to budget more accurately for it, but pointed out that if staff request reimbursement for relevant coursework the Board must provide it. In answer to Mr. Tepper's query regarding a \$4,000 line item, Ms. Wilfert clarified that the funds, requested for Assistant Town Manager leadership training had not been approved by the Board and were not in the requested amount..

**Article 6. Wage and Salary Schedule Adjustment.** Mr. Arnold asked for the Board's position on the 1.5% adjustment, as well as the requested stipend increase from \$1,000 to \$4,000 for the Assistant Veterans Agent. Mr. Titus explained that the 1.5% increase was approved by the Personnel Board and based on an approximate average of union contract increases for FY2013. Ms. Wilfert noted that the Board was not aware of the Assistant Veterans Agent stipend increase included in the article.

**Article 5. Council on Aging.** Mr. Titus explained that the Board had approved the Council on Aging's request for an increase from 19 to 35 hours/week for their Outreach position, although the Board's initial feeling had been that it was more of an advantage to the Town to have two part-time employees, with one acting as a back-up for the other.

Mr. Arnold asked if the Board had considered any alternatives to applying a 1.5% increase across the board, when some employees are getting step increases as well. Mr. Titus indicated that the Board had discussed this issue with Assistant Town Manager Kristi Williams. Mr. Parker pointed out that very few non-union Town employees were under the maximum step. Mr. Arnold noted that, at a future meeting outside Town Meeting season, the Committee would like to have a discussion with the Board to discuss possible alternate approaches to the current classification/step system as well as its comments on how the Personnel Board is working now that they are appointed by the Town Manager. He added that the Police Department's Chief Deputy request was being removed from the Warrant. Mr. Titus noted that the Board had approved that position.

#### **Country Club Operating Committee (Budget and article)**

John McMorro and John R. Arnold, Country Club Operating Committee members, appeared before the Committee to present this budget and related article. Mr. McMorro explained that the current Superintendent's contract expires at the end of the calendar year. Rather than guessing at the costs for the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the fiscal year, and also informing potential bidders of the Town's resources, the Operating Committee had initially budgeted for only half of the year. However, Mr. John R. Arnold noted that the Operating Committee had agreed to the Town Manager's preference of including the whole year's budgeted amount. Mr. Behn noted that the current Superintendent's salary is public record in any case. Ms. Blazejewski pointed out that as these funds are from Retained Earnings, the levy is not impacted.

**Article 10. Golf Course Improvements.** This article would transfer \$115,000 from Country Club Retained Earnings for equipment and drainage work. Mr. McMorro explained that \$70,000 of this would be used for a rough mower. Cart path improvements as well as a drainage project at the 8<sup>th</sup> hole are also planned. Mr. McMorro pointed out that these capital improvements are necessary to maintain the attractiveness of the course and expand the membership in the face of increasing competition from other golf courses. Mr. John R. Arnold added that there is now no waiting list for membership.

#### **Schedule of meetings planned through March 2012**

Mr. Arnold noted that the School Committee would be attending Thursday's meeting, as well as the Open Space Preservation Committee. There are 7 meetings after tonight, including next Monday which is

Presidents Day. The general consensus is that a Monday meeting will be useful so a meeting will be scheduled.

### **Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports**

Mr. Arnold reminded the Committee that he will be attending the Board of Selectmen meeting tomorrow night to request that the AFC article include the option to transfer from available funds, and welcomed any Committee members to join him. Mr. Allen felt Mr. Malloy should also be asked whether the \$4,000 for training for the Town Manager's assistant, removed from the Personnel Board budget, was to be added to the Town Manager's budget.

Ms. Blazejewski is waiting to hear from the Historical Commission.

Mr. Linnane had attended the Wastewater Treatment Plant meeting and noted a possible Insurance increase of \$3,000. He felt the WWTP budget could remain as is, with any future needs dealt with at Fall Town Meeting.

### **Comments and Concerns of Committee Members**

Mr. Behn noted the comment made earlier that the amount budgeted for degree stipends (contractually received after some employees complete college degrees) was a "trivial amount," and felt that the actual amount, approx. \$41,500, was not trivial.

Mr. Tepper noted that Mr. Malloy's and the Personnel Board's budgets both included funds for sick leave buybacks. Mr. Malone wondered if one was for union, the other for non-union personnel. Mr. Arnold will seek clarification.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Behn moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m. Vote to adjourn was 8 in favor, with 8 being present.

### **Document List**

FY13 BOS/Manager Budget Summary spreadsheet.  
Salary and Wage Request, BOS/Manager.  
Fincom Final 2-10-2012 School Department Powerpoint presentation.  
FY13 Budget Contingency Analysis spreadsheet.  
Manager/BOS FY12-FY13 Budget spreadsheet.  
Reserve Fund Free Cash comps spreadsheet.  
Town Charter Proposed 2012 Changes, provided by J. E. Arnold.  
Town Charter Proposed 2012 Changes, with Mr. Malone's comments.  
Assabet Valley Regional Technical School District FY13 Budget booklet.  
Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School Westborough Assessment History chart.