

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee  
Minutes of Meeting No. 25, FY2012  
February 20, 2012

Approved  
February 27, 2012

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

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. 23, February 13, 2012**

Mr. Malone and Mr. Behn 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 (Lown), with 8 being present.

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

#### **Discussion/Deliberation of Budgets and Warrant Articles**

Mr. Behn distributed four spreadsheets: "Contingency Analysis," showing where the largest surpluses in budget line items at the end of FY2011 were; "Budget Size Analysis," showing departments ranked as a percentage of the total budget, not including insurance; "Percent Increase Analysis," showing departments ranked by percent increase; and "Dollar Increase Analysis" showing departments ranked by total dollar increase. Mr. Arnold noted that these spreadsheets provide different ways of seeing the impact of the various budgets on the bottom line. The Committee then reviewed each department to determine where further discussion or information was needed.

**Moderator.** Town Moderator Joe Harrington will be coming in next week.

**Board of Selectmen/Town Manager.** The Sick Leave buyback question was answered, perhaps a discussion for a later time regarding 2 Sick Leave budgets in 2 different places.

**Advisory Finance Committee.** Mr. Arnold noted that a Central Purchasing arrangement for the printing of the Warrant could be looked into in the future, as that was the Committee's biggest variable.

**Town Accountant.** No questions.

**Town Assessor.** Linda Swadel will be coming to meet with the Committee.

**Treasurer/Collector.** Ms. Lown noted the surplus and will look into it. Ms. Blazejewski added that Expenses increased because the bank is no longer offering a discount.

**Legal Department.** Mr. Behn noted the surplus. Further discussion needed.

**Personnel Board.** This budget now agrees with the Town Manager's figure.

**MIS/GIS.** More discussion needed.

**Communications, Central purchasing, Town Clerk.** No questions.

**Elections/Registration.** This budget increased due to the extra election.

**Conservation Commission.** Ms. Lown noted that Expenses went up significantly. Mr. Allen stated increases were due to memberships, conferences and subscriptions. Explanation needed.

**Planning Board.** No questions.

**Board of Appeals.** Ms. Blazejewski noted the underuse of the Salary/Wages line. Explanation needed.

**Building & Grounds.** Further discussion needed, along with the custodian issue.

**Insurance.** Further discussion needed, along with the contingency issue.

**Police Department.** Mr. Arnold noted that the Deputy Chief position request was no longer on the Warrant. Ms. Lown felt the significant amount of overtime should be discussed in the future.

**Fire Department/EMS.** Ms. Lown felt there was an overtime issue here as well, for future discussion. She noted the July 31<sup>st</sup> deadline for the additional 911 dispatcher.

**Building Commissioner.** Mr. Arnold noted that a stipend was budgeted for both the Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner, even though only one of them would be providing services to Ashland in the long term. He felt if more funds were needed the department could request them at Fall Town Meeting. Follow up and further discussion is required.

**Weights & Measures, Animal Control.** No questions.

**Assabet.** Mr. Arnold felt a footnote was needed to explain the increase. No questions.

**DPW.** Ms. Lown noted two accounts which needed a closer look. More discussion needed.

**Snow/Ice.** Ms. Lown noted that a 10-year rather than 5-year rolling average was being considered but that neither was being used this year. Mr. Malone pointed out that using a 10-year average would downplay any inflationary effects of the cost of materials. Mr. Arnold felt this warranted discussion in the future.

**Street Lights.** Mr. Arnold felt a footnote should explain the increase of 7.5%.

**Sanitary Landfill.** Mr. Behn felt a footnote should point out that taxpayers are partially subsidizing this service for the fee payers. Mr. Arnold noted that the fees are also going up. Ms. Lown encouraged residents to reduce this budget by recycling more. Mr. Allen noted that the Harvey rate was going up 5%.

**Board of Health.** No questions.

**Council on Aging.** Three issues require further discussion: the increase to a full-time position, contracting out custodial services, and additional professional services. Ms. Lown would like to see a breakdown of the total cost of adding a full-time employee, including benefits.

**Youth & Family Services.** More discussion needed as well as a footnote, as the Town is being asked to resume funding Hot Summer Nights.

**Veterans Services.** Footnote needed regarding the increased stipend for the Assistant Veterans Agent but no further questions.

**Trustees of Soldiers Memorials.** No questions.

**Library.** More discussion needed regarding the custodial issue, as well as the overall increase to expenses. Mr. Arnold felt perhaps the library could consider ranking their various increases in priority order to help determine the Trustee's overall views when considering both the expense item increases and the custodian request. Ms. Blazejewski noted the Committee had requested some prioritization of the furniture requests. Ms. Lown noted the significant difference between the library request and the Town Manager's recommendation. Mr. Arnold to follow up.

**Recreation Department, Cultural Council.** No questions.

**Historical Commission.** Ms. Blazejewski to look into the \$1,000 in professional services.

**Debt Principal/Interest.** Ms. Lown felt the department should consider including larger amounts at the Annual Town Meeting, then reducing them at Fall Town Meeting. Brief discussion needed.

**Country Club Enterprise Fund.** Mr. Arnold will check that the department is satisfied with Mr. Malloy's approach.

**Sewer Operations.** A footnote is needed explaining that part of the mechanic position is also in this budget.

**Sewer Debt & Interest.** No questions.

**WWTP.** Mr. Behn noted the 4% increase. Ms. Lown felt the Committee should keep an eye on the significant contingency in this budget. There was some discussion of the difference in the CPI/PPI percentages used. Mr. Allen noted that if CPI is 3.5%, and the overall percentage is 4.2%, the PPI would then be increasing by 20%. He would like to look into this. Mr. Arnold felt a footnote was needed.

**Water Enterprise Fund.** Ms. Lown noted that this budget also includes a portion of the funds for the mechanic position. Mr. Behn added that operation maintenance and debt together are going down by .3%. Further discussion needed.

**School Department.** Mr. Malone felt further detail was needed, as well as final budget worksheets. He would like to see a breakdown of all special education-related costs, including transportation, out of district, etc. Ms. Lown noted that the Committee should develop a framework of what information the

School Department should provide on a consistent basis, with the level of detail required. She would like to see a breakdown of administrative vs. academic staff by cost and percentage. More discussion needed.

Mr. Arnold noted that a final check of the numbers was required before finalizing the Committee report.

### **Initial Voting on Budgets and Warrant Articles**

**Moderator.** Mr. Behn moves Salaries/Wages of \$250. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Board of Selectmen/Town Manager.** Ms. Lown moves Salaries/Wages Elected of \$2,500, Salaries/Wages of \$299,870, and Expenses of \$45,600 (total \$347,970). The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Advisory Finance Committee.** Mr. Behn moves Salaries/Wages of \$3,013, and Expenses of \$2,035. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Town Accountant.** Mr. Behn moves Salaries/Wages of \$141,414, and Expenses of \$555. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Personnel Board.** Mr. Behn moves Expenses of \$26,178. Mr. Malone and Ms. Lown felt there was need for some clarification. Mr. Behn withdraws his motion. No vote taken.

**Communications.** Mr. Behn moves Expenses of \$36,700. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Central Purchasing.** Mr. Behn moves Expenses of \$86,775. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Town Clerk.** Ms. Lown moves Salaries/Wages Elected of \$85,540, Salaries/Wages Regular of \$104,947, and Expenses of \$4,200. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Election/Registration.** Ms. Lown moves Salaries/Wages Elected of \$2,000, Salaries/Wages Regular of \$14,775, and Expenses of \$20,100. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Planning Board.** Mr. Behn moves Salaries/Wages of \$211,090, and Expenses of \$5,302. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Police Department.** Mr. Behn moves Salaries/Wages of \$2,614,700, and Expenses of \$106,500. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Fire Department/EMS.** Mr. Behn moves Salaries/Wages of \$3,156,197, and Expenses of \$308,359. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Weights & Measures.** Mr. Behn moves Expenses of \$2,250. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Animal Control.** Mr. Behn moves Salaries/Wages of \$50,076, and Expenses of \$19,295. Ms. Blazejewski suggested a footnote in the Committee's report explaining the drop in cost. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Snow/Ice.** Mr. Behn moves Salaries/Wages of \$142,396, and Expenses of \$306,815. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present. Footnote needed.

**Streetlights.** Mr. Behn moves Expenses of \$86,000. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present. Footnote needed.

**Landfill Contract.** Mr. Behn moves Expenses of \$771,606. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present. Footnote needed.

**Health Department.** Mr. Behn moves Salaries/Wages of \$270,359, and Expenses of \$12,800. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Veterans Services.** Mr. Behn moves Salaries/Wages of \$20,075, and Expenses of \$57,781. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present. Footnote needed.

**Trustees of Soldiers' Memorials.** Mr. Behn moves Expenses of \$2,800. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Recreation Department.** Mr. Behn moves Salaries/Wages of \$198,048. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

**Cultural Council.** Mr. Behn moves Expenses of \$2,000. The vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

Ms. Lown noted the current Town budget total is \$89,063,120.

### **Initial Discussion of Report and Recommendations “Message to Voters”**

Mr. Arnold asked Committee members to come up with topics and ideas which they feel should be included in the Message to Voters. Ms. Lown felt it would be useful to review the Committee’s comments from the last Town Meeting, to provide continuity. Mr. Arnold added that members should also review the Town Manager’s summaries before voting on articles. He and Mr. Behn will begin putting together the Committee’s report in a rough format.

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

Mr Arnold noted meetings would be each Monday and Thursday until March 8<sup>th</sup>.

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

Mr. Arnold reminded the Committee that Town Counsel Greg Franks is attending Thursday night’s meeting to discuss the bylaw articles. The Municipal Building Committee will be asked to attend the March 1<sup>st</sup> meeting. Mr. Arnold encouraged members to attend or watch the Board of Selectmen meeting on February 28<sup>th</sup>, at which the Municipal Building Committee will be making a presentation. He also asked for the Committee’s comments on the short message from the AFC to be handed out to voters on Election Day. Ms. Lown objected to the description of town government on the first side of that handout.

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

Mr. Allen asked if voting would proceed on the warrant at Thursday’s meeting. He felt one of the biggest issues for discussion with Mr. Franks was Article 22, on Snow/Ice removal. He also noted that authorship of the handout to voters should be clearly stated. Mr. Malone supported Ms. Lown in not wanting the Committee’s names included on the handout. After this discussion, Mr. Arnold said he would contact Mr. Harrington and pass along the comments and concerns.

Mr. Linnane felt a distinction should be made between a manager’s prerogative to include an “allowance for indeterminants”, vs. contingency, or “fluff”. Mr. Arnold added that there is a difference between a good faith estimate of what expenses will be, and simply padding the budget. Mr. Linnane felt that if departments are asked to budget only what is known for certain, they will get in the loop of constantly coming back for more funds. Ms. Lown noted that a history would be useful of why certain funds are in a particular budget, funds which may seem like contingencies but are not.

Ms. Blazejewski noted the excellent job the Fire Department did presenting its budget, and felt it could be a model for other departments.

Ms. Lown noted that the Committee receives projections from departments, and felt it would be useful to also get feedback at year end on how accurate those estimates were.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Behn moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m. Vote to adjourn was 8 in favor, with 8 being present.

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee minutes  
February 20, 2012

**Document List**

2012 Department Liaison Worksheet, Housing Authority.

FY13 Budget Analysis spreadsheets: Contingency/Surplus (based on FY2012), Department Budget Size, Percent Increase, & Dollar Increase, prepared by Ed Behn.

Draft Voter handout, prepared by Joe Harrington.