

Advisory Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting
9 September 2013

Approved:
September 16, 2013

Location: Selectmen's Meeting Room, Town Hall

Members present:

Ed Behn, Chair
John Arnold
Lisa Blazejewski
Peter Allen
Sharon Kaiser
Gary Wells
Hank Rauch

Members absent:

Kathy Rosenblum Senie
Jim Tepper

Others Present:

Jim Malloy, Town Manager

Mr. Behn called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm. He welcomed new committee member, Hank Rauch, who is replacing former committee member, J.J. Malone, and new Administrative Assistant, Jessica Thomas.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Wells' made a motion to approve the minutes of 5 August 2013 that were submitted by Mr. Arnold with some changes made by Mr. Behn. VOTED: 7 in favor, with 7 being present.

Review of Fall 2013 Special Town Meeting Warrant

Town Manager, Jim Malloy, was in attendance to review, with the committee, the 31 Articles that will be presented at the October 21, 2013 Special Town Meeting.

Article 1 related to the allowance of electronic voting at this special Town Meeting. Currently Article II, Section 18, calls for votes to be recorded by a "show of hands". This article would allow use of electronic voting for this Town Meeting.

Articles 2 through 6 relate to the State Hospital. Mr. Malloy said that he has drafted an Article regarding the Town's purchase of the State Hospital property for \$2.2 million and sent to the Bond Counsel who may be rewording. The Town would have to commit to borrowing the full amount which shouldn't have an immediate effect on taxes. Mr. Malloy hopes property can be sold off rather quickly since that is where we would receive the biggest incentive (reduction of 10% in payments to State if land sold within 1-2 years). The Committee suggested repeating the word "reduction" in bullet points 3, 4, and 5 under Article 2 for readers clarification. Article 3 is requesting that voters authorize the Board of Selectmen to file special legislation relating to the future sale of the State Hospital land so that the Town can act similar to a private party resulting in more competitive pricing and receiving maximum value for land. Mr. Malloy mentioned that

Article 3 needs to be approved before they can act on Article 2. Article 3 would provide the framework on how future parcels of land are sold. Article 4 would give authorization to the Board of Selectmen to sell off parcels of the State Hospital land which would help expedite sale of the land. Mr. Malloy said that the town hopes to keep the soccer fields and that there are wetlands that cannot be built on. That leaves about 8 parcels of land for sale. Future owners of the property may be required to build a walking trail. Mr. Malloy said that the town may also set aside land for a future school or community/recreation center. Article 6 is a request for funds to maintain the State Hospital property (security and general upkeep) until the property is sold.

Ms. Blazejewski brought up that voters may be worried about voting for the purchase of the State Hospital land since its use is undetermined so far. She felt that voters would be more concerned with what happens with the land rather than the vote to acquire the land. A suggestion was made that perhaps there could be a presentation at a public meeting on what the Town hopes to see done with the property and how the parcels will be sold.

Articles 7 through 9 were briefly mentioned but self-explanatory.

Articles 10 through 12 related to the classification and salaries of town employees. Article 10 dealt with establishing standardized pay for Recreation Dept. employees. Article 11 amended the classification of Recreation department employees. Mr. Malloy made note that the Recreation Department wasn't hiring more staff – just re-classifying. Articles 10 and 11 would outline standard salary tiers for how Recreation Department employees are paid which they haven't had in the past. Article 11 also corrects a title in the Council on Aging department and classifies the DPW Manager as a contracted, salaried employee.

Article 12 addressed the salaries of the Assistant Town Manager, Administrative Assistant in the Town Manager's office, Assistant DPW Manager, and buyback of sick leave for two retiring employees.

Part 1 of Article 12 addressed the salary of the Assistant Town Manager. Mr. Malloy pointed out that the Assistant Town Mgr was hired at the lowest rate possible. The Assistant Town Mgr currently makes \$68,000 but will receive a step increase in December to \$71,500. Mr. Malloy pointed out that most Assistant Town Managers make substantially more. The first part of Article 12 requests that the Assistant Town Manager's salary be increased to \$81,500 so it is more in line with what other Assistant Town Manager's make. Mr. Malloy believes the Level of S21 was the wrong level for an Assistant Town Manager and it should be Level S23. Mr. Malloy believes the job description needs to be re-written so it accurately reflects what the Assistant Town Manager does. He took a look at area towns and pointed out that Grafton's Assistant Town Manager makes \$83,000. Mr. Malloy is concerned about losing good employees to other towns. Mr. Malloy is working on collecting data on pay scales of Assistant Town Managers by comparing communities like ours with other towns that are demographically similar.

Part 2 of Article 12 is a request for the Administrative Assistant in the Town Manager's office be funded for that position at 40 hours per week and that another Administrative Assistant is hired for the Country Club Operating Committee. Right now she spends 35 hours/week on office work and 5 hours/week as Admin for the Country Club Operating Committee and it has created a workload issue. This part of Article 12 would separate the two positions.

Part 3 of Article 12 would align the salary of the Assistant DPW Manager to more accurately reflect what the second in commands in the Fire and Police Departments earn. Mr. Malloy said that in the Police and Fire Departments the Lieutenants and Captains get paid hourly so they receive overtime in the event of an emergency. The Assistant DPW Manager is salaried. Mr. Malloy took a look over the last year and stated that the second in command to Chief Gordon and Chief Perron earn about 90% of their chief's salaries. The Assistant DPW Manager earns about 82% of the DPW Manager's salary. Mr. Wells asked Mr. Malloy if he could give the committee a salary comparison over the past three years for better analysis.

Part 4 of Article 12 related to the retirement of the Recreation Department Manager and Assistant Manager and the need for additional funds to buy back their sick leave.

Articles 13, 14 and 15 were briefly discussed but were self-explanatory.

Articles 16, 17, and 18 related to the Senior Center. Article 16 called for hiring a contracted cleaning service to replace the custodian that is retiring. Mr. Malloy said it would save the town annually about \$31,500 plus benefits.

Article 17 would establish a fund that is governed by laws on how money is spent and authorized from donations received by the Senior Center. The fund needs to be properly set up as tax deductible and there should be accountability on how much money was brought in and where the funds were spent.

Article 18 requested funds for final paving and the completion of new curbing at the Senior Center.

Article 19 addressed the need for a part time salaried employee for the Economic Development Committee to continue their outreach efforts and to attend trade shows. Requesting that half of monies received to town from Clear Channel for digital billboards along Rte 9 be used for the part time employee and the other half deposited in the General Fund.

Article 20 looks to approve a TIF plan with the Town and Cumberland Farms on Flanders Road since they are adding 79 jobs at that location. Mr. Malloy said he would put together what Cumberland Farms proposed taxes would be.

Article 21 dealt with the Pump Station on Old Flanders Road. Mr. Malloy mentioned that the town received a gift bond from Avalon on Flanders in the amount of \$28,000 to go

towards the sewer fund. He is going to check with the Town Treasurer, Leah Talbot, to see if the gift funds can be applied to the request of \$40,000 for the repair, upgrade and maintenance of the Old Flanders Road sewer pump station and net out to the difference.

Article 22 is a request for funds for a mixing valve to be installed in the Fay Mountain Water Tank. The mixing valve would keep the water moving so it doesn't become stagnant which would lessen the chance of E-coli bacteria building up.

Article 23 is looking for the approval of funds for the repair or replacement of one of the large pumps at the Water Treatment Plant. One of the two large pumps failed the week of 9/2/13 and needed an emergency repair so funds have already been spent. Mr. Malloy has not yet received the bill for the repairs. If town doesn't approve then he will come to the committee.

Article 24 requested approval for a special fund to be established for donations to be accepted for seniors or disabled town citizens to use toward payment of their taxes. There would be no cost to the town since they would be voluntary contributions.

Articles 25 & 26 were mentioned but were self-explanatory.

Article 27 is looking to provide thresholds for earth moving jobs so smaller projects don't require a permit.

Article 28 was self-explanatory

Article 29 – Mr. Malloy is working on tightening up definitions.

Article 30 and 31 had to do with electronic voting.

The Articles are still a work in progress. Mr. Malloy expects to have final changes by late September. Mr. Behn will contact Chairs of other departments for them to meet with the committee to answer questions and provide clarification before the Special Town Meeting.

Update on the School Budget Format and Content

There was discussion on how the School Department arrives at their budget, especially the forecasted amount for the Special Education line item. Last year Special Education was budgeted for \$1.8 million, but came in at \$2.8 million. Mr. Behn, Ms. Rosenblum Senie, and Mr. Arnold met with the School Superintendent, Business Manager, and School Committee Chair to get a better understanding of how the Special Ed budget number is arrived at. The Business Manager puts together a budget and then applies grants that the town should receive to net out the final request for funds for Special Ed requirements. General feeling among the Finance Committee members was that there should be better accountability. Preference was to see total expenditures, and then total grants, not a final number after grant money is applied. Finance Committee members want an accurate reporting of line items so there is a better understanding of what is

being spent and the ability to see where budget versus actual numbers are off to plan for the following year. Currently the Finance Committee cannot make recommendations as to where expenses can be reduced without knowing the actual figures. Mr. Behn suggested another meeting with himself, Ms. Rosenblum Senie, Mr. Arnold, and the Business Manager to get figures from the last three years for comparison. There was concern from Finance Committee members that funds appropriated to other line items like textbooks or technology are being used to cover the Special Ed shortfall. Finance Committee would like clearer accounting of the School Department's budget with actual spending in categories totaled and revenue in categories totaled (no net figures).

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

An Ad Hoc Charter Review Committee is being created to study and recommend operational changes regarding reporting to the Town Manager and Selectmen. There was a need to designate someone from the Finance Committee. Mr. Arnold was interested in being the representative on the Ad Hoc Charter Review Committee. Mr. Allen made a motion to appoint Mr. Arnold as the representative from the Advisory Finance Committee for the Ad Hoc Charter Review Committee. VOTED: 6 in favor, 1 abstention (Mr. Arnold) with 7 being present.

Mr. Allen reported that the Municipal Building Committee will hold a ground breaking ceremony for the new Fire Station on Tuesday, 9/10, at 5:00 pm. Bidding for the renovation of the Town Hall will begin in October.

Future Meetings

The next Advisory Finance Committee meeting will be Monday, September 16, 2013 at 7:00 pm. There was discussion that the committee needs to meet twice a week (Monday and Thursday evenings) over the next few weeks to work out details on the Articles that will be presented at the Special Town Meeting on October 21st. It was also mentioned that, due to the renovation of the Town Hall, the meetings will eventually move to Room 23 at the Forbes Building. Mr. Behn will inform committee members of when the change in meeting location will take place.

Adjournment

Mr. Wells moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:55 pm. Motion to adjourn was 7 in favor, with 7 being present.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Thomas, Administrative Assistant