

Advisory Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting
3 October 2013

Approved:
October 10, 2013

Location: Room 23, Forbes Building

Members present:

Gary Wells
John Arnold
Kathy Rosenblum Senie
Jim Tepper
Hank Rauch
Lisa Blazejewski

Members absent:

Ed Behn
Sharon Kaiser
Peter Allen

Others Present:

Jim Malloy, Town Manager
Scott Shumway, Westborough Community Land Trust

Mr. Wells called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

Review of Fall 2013 Special Town Meeting Warrant

Article 14

Mr. Scott Shumway met with the committee to discuss Article 14. Mr. Shumway is a Biology Professor at Wheaton College, a member of the Westborough Community Land Trust, and a former member of the Conservation Commission. He spoke about his views regarding the timber harvesting that is being proposed for the Conservation managed land in the Bowman Street area. Mr. Shumway did not feel that Conservation land should be used for harvesting trees, but rather should be managed as a preservation of our natural resources. He has reviewed the Conservation Commission's Forestry Management plan and doesn't agree with some of their objectives – specifically providing income to the land owner from selling trees and regarding removal of invasive species (Honeysuckle). Mr. Tepper asked Mr. Shumway to explain the difference between forest land and conservation land. Mr. Shumway said there were two ways conservation land could be managed – one as a forestry where trees are grown to harvest, and the other is to conserve the land and let nature take its course. With the forestry management plan, the land is still considered as conservation land since it can be used for recreation and it isn't being built on, but he didn't feel it was preserving the forest. Ms. Blazejewski asked about the removal of the invasive species and if there's cause for concern down the road. Mr. Shumway agreed that removing the invasive species was a worthy endeavor since it allows native trees to flourish, along with species and birds, but he was concerned with the removal of trees to get to the invasive species. He said it was a time consuming job since the invasive species need to be removed by the roots, so he thought heavy equipment may need to be brought in. Mr. Shumway was also concerned with opening up the canopy in the forest and fueling more growth of the invasive species. He felt that any sale of trees from the Conservation managed land was a mismanagement of the land – even if it was to remove invasive species.

Ms. Rosenblum Senie pointed out that the Forestry Management Plan contradicts the Conservation Commission's property management guidelines for Sandra Pond/Bowman West that is posted on their website. The property management guidelines state that "there shall be no cutting plan for native species other than for public safety".

AFC members requested further clarification of this article by Conservation Committee members regarding the work proposed on the Conservation managed land. The AFC Administrative Assistant will invite members of the Conservation Commission to the AFC meeting on Thursday, 10/10.

Article 10

Mr. Malloy was in attendance to discuss Article 10 – specifically the salary increase for the Assistant Town Manager and the Assistant DPW Manager. Mr. Malloy felt that these positions were not classified correctly to begin with, so therefore not paid correctly. He has taken on the pay classification as an in-house project but may need to hire a consultant in order for people to feel comfortable with it.

Regarding the salary increase for the Assistant Town Manager, Mr. Malloy reviewed the salaries of Assistant Town Managers in towns demographically similar to Westborough and their pay scale was higher. Mr. Malloy is concerned with losing a good employee and mentioned that Ms. Williams was brought in at the low end of the pay scale. He felt that if we had to hire someone new, that he could pay more, but that person would need to be trained. Mr. Malloy felt it made more sense to increase Ms. Williams' salary since she's doing a good job and knows what to do. He mentioned that the increase to her salary would be about 10% after her salary increase in December from being employed with the town for 3 years. He also said that he may need to reclassify levels. Mr. Arnold asked if this could result in more requests from town employees for raises and/or a reclassification. Mr. Malloy didn't think that would happen. In reviewing records from years ago, he felt that the Personnel Board didn't classify this position correctly from the start. Mr. Malloy would also like to avoid discriminatory practices by ensuring that "individuals providing the same value are compensated equally".

Ms. Rosenblum Senie asked Mr. Malloy about the request for a salary increase for the Assistant DPW Manager and the justification. Mr. Malloy said it was difficult to find anyone comparable to the Assistant DPW Manager in any other town so he looked at the second in command within the other town departments (Police & Fire). Mr. Voutas has been given comp time for additional hours worked but it is difficult to use up all of his accrued comp time (estimated at anywhere between 10-24 weeks). Mr. Wells mentioned that if there's a snow storm or water main break and Mr. Voutas works a 24 hour shift, he is currently paid for 8 hours and receives 16 hours of comp time. Comparably, if a policeman or fireman works a 24 hour shift, it is looked at as 8 hours regular pay, 8 hours at time and a half, and 8 hours at double time. The proposed salary increase – if approved – would eliminate both accrued comp time and new comp time and give equal pay for equal work. Ms. Rosenblum Senie would feel more comfortable if there was documentation that Mr. Voutas' accrued comp time would be wiped out with the salary increase if this article passes.

Mr. Tepper mentioned he was concerned as to why these issues aren't brought up in the town budget and instead are brought up "off cycle" at the Special Town Meeting. Mr. Malloy felt it was important to bring up since he saw the issue now and it would be about another 8 months if he had waited.

Article 30

Mr. Malloy briefly discussed Article 30 regarding renovations to the Country Club. Mr. Arnold mentioned that we do not currently have an idea of the build out and he'd like to get the actual plan. Mr. Malloy mentioned that the Planning Board has the plans, and either at the Town Meeting or the Site Plan Review, residents will see the actual plans and can ask questions. Mr. Arnold asked if Mr. Malloy could mention that at the Town Meeting so residents are aware.

It was decided that additional discussion on Article 10 and Article 14 was necessary when more committee members are present. Mr. Arnold mentioned that a final copy of the Special Town Meeting Warrant was needed - as approved - and sent out to the committee. Once received, he suggested that committee members review, double check wording, and highlight any changes. Continued discussion and review of the final warrant will take place at Thursday's (10/10) meeting.

Future Meetings

The next Advisory Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 10, 2013 at 7:00 pm in Room 23 at the Forbes Building. The meeting scheduled for Monday, October 7th, was canceled.

Liaison Reports:

Mr. Arnold mentioned that Maureen Ambrosino from the library let him know that they have been named as one of nine libraries in MA & RI that were selected for National Grid's "Light Up Your Library" campaign. An event will be held in early November and more details should be announced soon.

Adjournment

Mr. Arnold moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 pm. Motion to adjourn was 6 in favor, with 6 being present.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Thomas, Administrative Assistant