

Members Present: Ed Behn, Chair, Peter Allen, John E. Arnold, Lisa Blazejewski, Jim Tepper, Gary Wells, Hank Rauch, Kathy Rosenblum Senie. Absent: Sharon Kaiser.

At 7:30 p.m. Mr. Behn called the meeting to order in Room 23 of the Forbes Building.

Call to Order/Open Forum

Joseph Harrington came before the Committee to announce his retirement. After 24 years as Town Moderator, he will be stepping down. He wanted to let the AFC know personally and that he has enjoyed working with this Committee. Mr. Harrington will continue to be the moderator until the Annual Town Meeting and then will help with transitioning to the new moderator. He noted that one of the duties of the moderator is filling vacancies on the AFC.

Mr. Harrington also spoke about electronic voting and the need to decide if there should be an article in the spring warrant. He has received positive feedback from the test done at the Special Town Meeting in October. Mr. Harrington said that electronic voting could change the way people vote since it provides anonymity, and he would be a proponent of the article as part of the ad hoc committee. He believes the amount would be at least \$25,000 for a year of electronic voting, and he understands and respects the concern over the cost. Mr. Harrington said some bidding process would be called for to see what would work best. There are also towns that purchase their own systems and then share with other towns. There would just be a need to make sure town meetings didn't overlap. Mr. Harrington mentioned that secret ballots without clickers took too much time to tally the votes. The clickers would provide a secret ballot and the voting results in a timely manner. Mr. Wells said he would like a floating number of active clickers, and that the yeas, nays, and abstentions should equal the number of active clickers. Mr. Harrington pointed out that at the Special Town Meeting in October voters indicated 86 to 60 that they would like electronic voting, so his hope is that it is voted on at the next Town Meeting. Mr. Harrington felt electronic voting could cut down on uncomfortable feelings and perhaps increase attendance at Town Meetings.

The Committee thanked Mr. Harrington for his many years of service.

Approval of Minutes

Meeting No. 11 (STM), October 21 & 22, 2013

Mr. Wells moved to accept the minutes from 10/21-10/22/13. The vote to approve the minutes is 7-0-1 with 8 being present (abstention: Allen).

Meeting No. 12, November 4, 2013

Mr. Tepper requested a correction to the minutes. Mr. Wells moved to accept the amended minutes from 11/4/13. The vote to approve the amended minutes is 6-0-2 with 8 being present (abstentions: Rosenblum Senie and Rauch).

Reserve Fund Transfer

Mr. Malloy submitted a "Request for Transfer from Reserve Fund" in the amount of \$6,500.00 for the hiring of a Charrette to aid in the planning of the State Hospital land. There were questions from Committee members on how this would work. Ms. Rosenblum Senie asked if anyone could attend the meeting with the Charrette or only those that are invited. She felt there should be additional opportunities for residents to provide input – the Charrette shouldn't be the only venue. Mr. Wells and Mr. Arnold felt there would be additional discussion. Mr. Behn said the Charrette would aid in giving the Selectmen a "road map" as to what the majority of residents would like done with this land and would provide a consensus to jump start the planning process. Since the Town hopes to close on this land in June 2014, the planning process needs to start sooner rather than later. Once the date

is selected for the meeting with the Charrette and residents, the Committee would like the date communicated right away so the public is aware of when this meeting will take place.

Mr. Wells made a motion to transfer the amount of \$6,500.00 from the AFC Reserve Fund to the Selectmen/Town Manager Reserve Fund #112235219 for the purpose of performing a Charrette. VOTED: 8-0-0 with 8 being present.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Behn informed the Committee that he spoke with Irene Oliver, Director of Finance & Administration with the School Department, and she will provide line item detail on the school budget in January.

Mr. Arnold said that the School Committee has met and they are showing actual figures for the last three years. The School Committee finished presenting individual budgets last week. Mr. Arnold and Ms. Rosenblum Senie will provide copies of the slides to the members of the AFC. Next week the School Committee will vote on their recommendation. They are trying to keep the budget level funded but they noted there have been requests for staffing changes. They also mentioned that the student population has remained fairly consistent. There was discussion about a housing bubble. Mr. Behn noted that in the 80's and 90's there were a lot of young families that moved in to town with young children. Now those children have moved on to college or beyond and those families may move and sell to younger families possibly causing another housing bubble. Mr. Behn suggested speaking to realtors and keeping an eye on the situation so the AFC can react to any changes.

Mr. Allen informed the Committee that the Municipal Building Committee approved and recommended low bidder, RAC Builders, as the General Contractor for the Town Hall renovations. The Selectmen have approved as well. Mr. Allen noted that the bid came in lower than what was appropriated, and RAC Builders came highly recommended with no blemishes on their record.

Mr. Wells has a preliminary budget review with the DPW on Tuesday, 12/3. He is also going to be meeting with the Police Dept. on Wednesday, 12/4, to review their budget. Mr. Rauch will accompany him as Co-Liaison.

Ms. Blazejewski reported that the Capital Expenditure Committee had an emergency meeting since the School Dept had not submitted their capital list for the year. She said the Committee is in the process of rating the projects on merits and then Mr. Malloy will review the requests to prioritize. Ms. Blazejewski said there may be large purchase requests coming up at the Annual Town Meeting. She also mentioned the Mill Pond School's gym floor. They continue to have problems with water bubbles despite completing all testing as required. The warranty is still valid since the floor was just installed in August, but there may be a shortfall.

Mr. Behn brought up the Council on Aging since there was discussion about capital projects. He said he met with Alma Demanche, George Barrette, Bill Linnane, and Sue Abladian. Mr. Behn suggested that they come up with a plan for their long term needs. If they would like a consultant to help them in this process, then they can submit as a separate article instead of a capital request.

Mr. Tepper updated the Committee on the Gibbons renovation project. He said there is still ongoing discussion about when the renovations will take place – whether it will be during the school year or over the summer months. If it was over the summer, Mr. Tepper thought it may take two summer semester's to complete. If it was during the school year, then classrooms would be displaced and they would have to relocate – possibly to the gym. They will look at the budget to see what makes sense.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

Mr. Allen passed out a handout from the Worcester Business Journal regarding the residential and commercial property tax rates for Central Massachusetts. Westborough was listed in comparison with other towns.

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee minutes
December 2, 2013

Ms. Blazejewski mentioned researching what other towns do regarding their reporting to residents on articles presented at Town Meeting and also their budgeting process. Mr. Behn said he will email members of the Committee with their assignments.

Adjournment

Mr. Wells moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:02 p.m. Vote to adjourn was 8 in favor, with 8 being present.

Document List

Request for Transfer from Reserve Fund

Mullin Associates Inc. – Proposal for the Westborough State Hospital Charrette

Worcester Business Journal – Property Tax Rates

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Thomas

AFC Administrative Assistant