

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting No. 20, FY2014
February 6, 2014

Approved:
February 20, 2014

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

At 7:00 p.m. Mr. Behn called the meeting to order in Room 23 of the Forbes Building.

Call to Order/Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Approval of Minutes

Meeting No. 18, January 30, 2014

Mr. Behn decided to wait on the vote until the Committee had a chance to review.

Review of the Library's FY15 Budget and Articles:

Library Director, Maureen Ambrosino, along with Trustees of Public Library members – Dorothy Mello, Carolyn Spring, and Karen Fay, attended tonight's meeting with the AFC to discuss their FY15 budget and their plans for the future of the Library. Ms. Ambrosino said that their budget is pretty straightforward. The increase of 3.3% to their Salaries & Wages line item is contractual and covers cost of living increases. Regarding the Expenses line item, they had a slight increase of 2.1% in materials. Ms. Ambrosino explained that they need to have their electronic resources and e-books (category 5224E) account for at least 15% (currently about \$86,000) of their total budget in order to maintain their certification with the State. The Library is shifting out of printed materials in to electronic resources and e-books. The electronic resources under category 5224E increased by about \$4,800. Ms. Ambrosino said they level funded their other supplies (CD's, DVD's, and other non-print items) and kept most of their other expenses in line with last year. Ms. Ambrosino mentioned they may be overspent on utilities. She said they had budgeted for a decrease in utilities but may come up short. There was a suggestion of a decrease due to net metering credits, but Ms. Ambrosino mentioned she hasn't had a chance to discuss with Town Manager, Jim Malloy.

Ms. Ambrosino handed out a Space Plan Presentation for the Library and discussed their plans for the future. She began the discussion with early history on the Library and how it began in 1777 and was located in the town's first store. In 1868 the Library moved from the Parkman Store in to the Town Hall. In 1908 land was purchased and the Library was constructed and opened at its current location. In 1981, the building was expanded. Ms. Ambrosino said that it is time to update the Library based on how people are using it since not much has been done to the building in 33 years. There is more demand for study rooms and space for working in small groups. They are also purchasing more electronic materials and removing the print copy to provide more room. Ms. Ambrosino mentioned that the tables and chairs they have from 1981 are durable but are now old, heavy, uncomfortable, and hard to move. She said they need more flexibility with their space. There is also a crack in the foundation on the addition that needs attention and they have a power and data structure that is outdated, insufficient, and slow. She said that the wiring in the building is a mess and the bandwidth going in to the building doesn't meet the demand of the users. Ms. Ambrosino pointed out that their ventilation and air conditioning runs on electric and that's why there is the fear of overspending.

In surveys completed by residents and users of the Library, there is an importance placed on having access to technology and someone friendly and knowledgeable who can help with use of electronic devices. Ms. Ambrosino said that currently there is no space in the building for a computer lab. They would like to have the bandwidth in to the building increased so people are able to check out electronic devices for use in the library and the speed of accessing the internet doesn't become too slow. She said they are looking ahead 20 years to 2035 and estimating that the population in Westborough will be around 21,000. Based on that projection, they need to meet the requirements and basic standards for space and staffing. Ms. Ambrosino said that interactions between her staff and patrons are more complex and take longer since they may be more technological in nature. Another request from the surveys was for a

librarian dedicated to the Teen population. Ms. Ambrosino mentioned that staff work space isn't located in ideal areas. She'd like to centralize circulation and reference with check out so there's one central area for patrons to go to ask questions and check out materials. Ms. Ambrosino said she'd also like to have a self-check so people can check out their own materials since it is more familiar technology now that it is available in grocery stores. Some other proposed changes are updating technology, adding programs, partnering with other town organizations like Westborough TV, increasing parking, and having more study space available. Ms. Ambrosino said they hired a space consultant who suggested opening up the third floor, getting smaller tables and chairs, and having rolling dividers and white boards for study groups. Other changes include re-designing the bookshelves and rows to improve security, safety, and make it easier for physically impaired patrons, and adding a Starbucks kiosk. For the lower level, they'd like to add a teen area, increase the number of windows, re-design the children's room by age group, and move the desk to the center of the room so the whole area can be viewed and Librarians can greet patrons. Ms. Ambrosino mentioned that circulation has been experiencing an upward trend over the past ten years and their turnover rate increased. In summary Ms. Ambrosino said that the Library is doing well but struggling to meet the needs of 21st century patrons.

Ms. Ambrosino also mentioned that funding for the renovations is a big issue. They have applied for a \$40,000 planning and design grant, which will pay for two-thirds of the cost of working with an architect to come up with schematic designs and structural studies. Ms. Ambrosino said that there is a Construction Bond Bill, which includes \$150 million for library construction, before the legislature. If this bill is passed, it would free up money for projects like this one. Ms. Ambrosino believes the bill will pass and then she expects the state will announce the recipients of the construction grants. Ms. Ambrosino said that this bill will typically pay for half the cost of new construction or renovation, so basically we could have the project completed for half price. The grant would cover infrastructure, wiring, and design, but does not include items like furniture and carpeting. Ms. Ambrosino suggested fundraising or requesting funds at Town Meeting for the other half of the cost for this project. Ms. Ambrosino also mentioned that staffing has to be improved, as well as a parking study done. With an increase in the population, the parking will only get worse. There was general agreement that after 33 years some updates and renovations were needed at the Library.

The AFC thanked Ms. Ambrosino and the Trustees for their attendance at tonight's meeting.

Review of the Council on Aging's FY15 Budget and Articles:

Alma Demanche, Director of the Council on Aging, Charles Flood, Chairman, Council on Aging, Daniel Pavolis, Vice-Chair, Council on Aging, and other members from the Council on Aging met with the AFC to discuss their FY15 budget. Ms. Demanche is requesting funds to keep an Asian outreach worker she hired last July, along with funds to hire an additional bus driver.

Ms. Demanche began the discussion with her request to continue the outreach work that they began last summer. She said that Kirkside had given the Council on Aging a \$5,000 grant last year and she had recognized the need for outreach help with Asian elders moving in to elderly housing in Westborough. Ms. Demanche said she spoke with the person who administers the Asian outreach program in Worcester and had Assistant Town Manager, Kristi Williams, place an ad on the Town website for someone in Westborough. Last July she hired a woman who speaks both Mandarin and Cantonese and she has made progress in growing this program by reaching out to the community, going through the phone book, and visiting other programs. In addition to providing social activities for Asian elders, the outreach worker has helped translate vital life documents in the event of an emergency, helped with social security and health insurance issues, shown them how to take the bus to doctor's appointments and to the grocery store, and invited the ambulance and EMT's to the Senior Center to remove the fear some of these Asian elders have with regard to our medical response vehicles. Members of the Council on Aging have also started an "English as a Second Language" (ESL) class for the Asian elders, since the biggest obstacle has been the language barrier. Ms. Demanche said she is looking for \$6,336 in their professional services line item to continue the work the outreach worker has begun with the Asian elder population and said they currently have about 35 Asian elders in the program. AFC members were curious as to what made her target the Asian population. Ms. Demanche said that she saw an increase in Asian elders moving in to Westborough Country Village and Westborough Housing Authority which is why they chose to hire an outreach worker for this population. AFC members asked if this was a Westborough specific issue or if something could be done regionally and asked why these Asian elders were moving in to the Westborough area. Ms. Demanche said that the Asian elders are being brought over by their adult children so they can babysit their grandchildren while their parents

work. Ms. Demanche said she didn't know if this situation was specific to Westborough and whether something could be done on a regional basis but she would bring up the subject at her next Metrowest Director's meeting to see what other towns are experiencing. Ms. Demanche said that the outreach worker puts in about 5-6 hours a week and she doesn't think the hours will increase. Ms. Demanche was asked if she thought the Asian elders were becoming more self-sufficient. She said she did, since they are coming to the ESL class and getting more comfortable with the community. Mr. Allen acknowledged that Ms. Demanche saw a need for an Asian outreach worker and used the grant to hire an outreach worker for this population. He asked if this was her only request or does she think she'll be back looking for additional funds next year for outreach workers to assist with other cultures? Ms. Demanche said she checks new populations moving in to town and doesn't see a need for an outreach worker for other cultures right now, though she said she continues to see a need with the Asian population. Ms. Demanche was asked why this request wasn't addressed in the Town Manager's statement. Ms. Demanche said she felt it was more due to the process – she mentioned that Town Manager, Jim Malloy, felt her programs often started out as grants and then ended up in the budget. It was noted that the Selectmen still have not voted on this request and the Council on Aging may need to meet with them. It was also mentioned that currently there are about 3,500 people over the age of 60 in Westborough, and about 17% consider themselves part of the Asian population. Council on Aging members did inform the AFC that they have had difficulty working with the Asian population due to the language barrier, and also that these Asian elders are very frightened, however, they do see progress and the Asian elders are attending more classes, activities and workshops.

Ms. Demanche addressed her other request for an additional part time bus driver. Currently she has 3 part time drivers that work 19 hours per week using the 2 buses. With 3 drivers, they are able to provide 11.4 hours of service per day Monday through Friday for the transportation of seniors. If they were able to add a fourth driver, that would bring the hours of service per day to 15.2 using the 2 buses. This would allow them to expand their hours of service since they have had requests for early morning or late afternoon medical appointments. Ms. Demanche mentioned they are also transporting a couple of non-elderly folks to their work situations. In addition to getting seniors to their appointments, she would also like to add quarterly shopping trips so seniors can purchase gifts and clothing, and social outings like trips to Mechanics Hall or to get ice cream. Ms. Demanche said that having an additional driver would give them more flexibility with their schedule. Right now they accommodate appointments Monday through Wednesday and on Fridays. They try to avoid Thursdays since they find traffic in town is at its worst. Thursdays they do the grocery shopping since they don't have to be there for a specific time. Ms. Demanche mentioned the challenges of getting through the center of town several times per day and also that they have wheel chair bound seniors that need help getting on and off the bus. Even with 2 buses always running, Ms. Demanche says they are having difficulty getting people where they need to be. Ms. Demanche said the hours for the buses could be expanded somewhat but she only wants the buses running when someone is in the office in case of an emergency. Ms. Demanche was asked if public transit could help with some of the transportation. She said that public transit doesn't go where they need them to go and they aren't going to wait and then drive someone home. Mr. Behn asked Ms. Demanche if there would be any offsetting revenue to pay for the cost of the fourth driver. Ms. Demanche said that there could be additional revenue generated by fares from more people riding the bus but she didn't have any projected numbers and guessed at about \$25/month. AFC members suggested the need for a plan for the future to see what needs to be done to accommodate Westborough's aging population and how we're going to fund it. Mr. Behn pointed out that they could have a study done, which may cost money to have done correctly, but they could request funding for coming up with a projected 10-year plan through an article since it would be a one-time expense. Ms. Demanche recognized the need for a vision or study but said that the Senior Center, in comparison to other departments, was less than ¼% of the town budget yet accounts for 16% of the population in town.

Ms. Demanche also discussed the buses they have and her concern over the mileage and age. She mentioned that they were able to raise \$150,000 in 5 months through donations to purchase both buses because the community recognized a need. Right now both buses have 90,000+ in mileage - and more if you factor in idling time. Ms. Demanche was asked if they are experiencing problems with the buses. She said they need new tires and they are having some issues with the lifts. Mr. Behn said he would be more concerned with breakdowns since you wouldn't want seniors caught in the cold. Ms. Demanche said that hasn't happened yet but she feels it is coming and mentioned that her request for new buses was pushed back to 2018. Mr. Rauch felt there was a subtle message if they are having difficulty getting budget items approved and stressed the need for a vision, or they may continue to have difficulty. AFC members again agreed with

the need for statistics to provide justification for budget requests and mentioned that the danger of not being able to justify requests is that they become a “nice to have”. If Ms. Demanche can show that her requests indicate she’s not able to cover a basic need, then it becomes more important. Mr. Behn pointed out another justification for the buses was that some seniors drive that perhaps shouldn’t be on the road, or seasonally shouldn’t drive like in the winter. Ms. Demanche said she has worked well with Chief of Police, Al Gordon. When they have discussed the need to take away someone’s license that it is easier to do because they have the buses and a system in place to still get them around.

Ms. Demanche and the Council on Aging members were thanked for attending tonight’s meeting.

Snow & Ice Deficit

Mr. Wells informed the Committee that the DPW needs authorization from the AFC to allow an additional deficit spend for Salaries & Wages. Mr. Wells moved that the Committee vote to approve that the DPW be allowed an additional deficit spend in the amount of \$25,000 for Salaries & Wages for the Snow & Ice budget. The vote to approve the authorization was unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present. To date the DPW has been given authorization from the AFC for an additional deficit spend in the amount of \$50,000 in Expenses and \$50,000 in Salaries & Wages for the Snow & Ice budget.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Behn informed the Committee that he believes Article 18 will be dropped and the warrant will close on 2/25/14. Mr. Behn also brought up Article 9 C for the Police/Fire Public Safety Radio Tower which is currently presented in the warrant as a raise and appropriate for funding and would affect the tax levy. Mr. Behn felt that since the Town had sufficient reserves that the option of using free cash should be offered. There was discussion amongst AFC members as to whether to go with the article as written, or make it a blend of raise and appropriate and free cash, or strictly free cash. Mr. Behn pointed out that right now they can only go forward with the way the article is currently written. Committee members agreed that the language should be changed to allow flexibility on how the tower is funded and then the AFC can make a recommendation. Mr. Behn said he would contact Town Manager, Jim Malloy, and copy Selectmen Chair, Ian Johnson, to let them know that the AFC discussed and believe there should be the flexibility between using free cash and/or raise and appropriate. Mr. Allen suggested that Mr. Behn mention in his email that the AFC didn’t vote against the way the article was currently written but would merely like the flexibility on funding.

Mr. Behn handed out an updated copy of the Financial Revenue & Expenditure Estimates for 2015 as of 2/6/14. He has not received the tax rate yet so he mentioned he is using last year’s rate. Mr. Behn said he did receive updated figures from Town Accountant, Leah Talbot, and Cherry Sheet figures from Town Manager, Jim Malloy. Mr. Behn informed the Committee that the School Department re-voted their budget. There were two key elements that came up – net metering credits and special needs students. They asked for an additional \$183,000+ for transportation and education for special needs students and that is factored in to the updated Revenue & Expenditure handout.

Mr. Behn pointed out that, as of today, there aren’t any departments scheduled to come in and meet with the Committee on Monday, 2/10. He said he may end up canceling that meeting.

Mr. Arnold provided an update to AFC members on his meeting today with Paul George, Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School (AVRTHS) School Committee Vice-Chairman, Patrick Collins, AVRTHS Superintendent/Director and Kris Luoto, AVRTHS Business Manager. Ms. Rosenblum Senie was also in attendance at the meeting. Mr. Arnold indicated that the AVRTHS budget was approximately \$658,000 but they now have it down to \$646,106. The increase to their budget is about 3.3%. Mr. Arnold reported that Westborough currently has about 42 students enrolled at Assabet as compared to 43 from last year. Mr. Arnold indicated that the increase is a result of the Assabet teaching staff being in their last year of contracts for FY15, which results in a standard increase. Assabet is also requesting an additional 3.5 positions added to their staff. The additional staff would break down to a full time Special Education Teacher, a full time instructor for the Junior ROTC program since many students that graduate go in to the military, a full time para-professional to float between vocational shops, and the half position would be for a part time health tech instructor which is their largest growing program. Mr. Arnold explained that AVRTHS offers 17 different shops for freshmen to go through. Upon completion, freshmen choose 6 that they are most interested in and then their top 3. They are eventually placed in a particular shop that they are most interested in and spend time in that

particular field along with academics. Mr. Arnold mentioned that AVRTHS staff's health insurance plan is also being negotiated and they are seeing an increase of about 7.5%. In FY'16 there will be a slight change which will have employees paying a little more and AVRTHS paying a little less. The AVRTHS budget also includes OPEB and they are increasing their funding. Mr. Arnold mentioned the renovations taking place at the school and that the project should come in under budget and on time. AVRTHS has partitioned off areas undergoing renovations and have a graveyard shift that works at night. They will also have two summers where they'll complete the bulk of the work. AVRTHS members believe they'll be able to finish the renovations without requesting more money. Mr. Arnold said he would get their booklets and they'll be available at the Town Meeting.

AFC members reviewed Articles 20 & 21 and mentioned that perhaps the Planning Board should be invited in to discuss. Mr. Behn asked AFC Administrative Assistant, Jessica Thomas, to contact Jim Robbins. Mr. Allen mentioned also including Planning Board Chair, Lester Hensley.

Mr. Allen informed the AFC that he attended the last Economic Development Committee meeting and they have established a date for the Charrette regarding use of the former State Hospital property. The Charrette will be meeting with residents on Saturday, 4/12/14, from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. and lunch will be included. The meeting is open to all residents. The location is yet to be determined.

Mr. Arnold reminded the Committee that tomorrow afternoon (Friday, 2/7) is the first meeting of the Charter Review Committee. He is still looking for a replacement in the event he is elected as Town Moderator, and asked if there were any AFC members interested in being the liaison. Mr. Arnold pointed out that the nomination would require a vote and then the Selectmen would have to complete paperwork. Mr. Behn said that he had approached Ms. Blazejewski to see if she was interested in being the liaison and mentioned that she would make an outstanding representative for the Charter Review Committee. Mr. Behn made a motion to nominate Ms. Blazejewski as the Advisory Finance Committee liaison to the Charter Review Committee. The vote to approve Ms. Blazejewski is 8-0-1 (abstention: Blazejewski). Mr. Arnold will submit his resignation, if elected as Town Moderator, and follow up with Town Manager, Jim Malloy.

Mr. Wells provided an update on the Wastewater Treatment Plant. He met with Jack Goodhall and they discussed the reduction to their budget as primarily due to an expense decrease in electrical cost. The reason for the reduction isn't clearly identified, but they think it is due to a dry summer/fall, along with reduced use at Astra Zeneca and Cumberland Farms. There also may be a couple of other contributors such as the small contribution by the solar array and the reduction to the legal budget, since there are no pending issues at this time. Mr. Wells mentioned there was a slight increase from Veolia Water, along with a small wage increase of .87%. Mr. Wells noted that the plant is still operating at 80-85% covering Westborough, Shrewsbury, and Hopkinton. Mr. Wells mentioned that Shrewsbury is about at their limit for allocated flow. Westborough is not and still has room to grow. Shrewsbury is contemplating building another plant toward the Worcester line since they are almost at maximum capacity due to the Town's growth. Mr. Wells indicated that the budget shows what we pay out, but we are also reimbursed from Shrewsbury and Hopkinton. Mr. Wells said that the EPA is still reviewing materials being discharged in to the Assabet River and are a year behind with their findings. Mr. Wells mentioned that we are coming up on the end of our 5 year permit and there could be significant changes to the budget once we hear back from the EPA. Mr. Wells did not feel there was a need for Mr. Goodhall to meet with the AFC.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

Ms. Rosenblum Senie asked if the AFC Historical Commission liaison, Lisa Blazejewski, could get a copy of the statement Hazel Nourse read at the beginning of her meeting with the AFC on 2/3/14. Ms. Rosenblum Senie was also wondering to what extent the current Historical Commission Administrative Assistant supports the activities of the commission in carrying out duties required by the state other than maintaining the archeological artifacts. Mr. Behn asked if getting a job description for the Historical Commission Administrative Assistant would help. Ms. Blazejewski said she would contact Ms. Nourse for the job description and also to find out the type of support that their Administrative Assistant offers as far as adhering to state regulations. Mr. Behn noted that the Historical Commission will be discussing their department and the proposed budget cuts at the next Selectmen's meeting on 2/11/14.

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee minutes
February 6, 2014

Adjournment

Mr. Wells made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:13 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 9 in favor, with 9 being present.

Document List

Westborough Public Library Space Plan Presentation – February 2014

Westborough Senior Scene

Asian Elders Outreach Handout

Council on Aging Bus Statistics

Financial Revenue & Expenditure Estimates for FY2015 (as of 2/6/14)

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Thomas

AFC Administrative Assistant