

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

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

Approval of Minutes

Meeting No. 23, February 24, 2014

Mr. Behn and Ms. Rosenblum Senie requested corrections to the minutes. Mr. Wells made a motion to accept the amended minutes from 2-24-14. The vote was 5-0-2 with 7 being present (abstentions: Rauch, Kaiser).

Meeting No. 24, February 27, 2014

Ms. Rosenblum Senie and Mr. Allen requested corrections to the minutes. Mr. Wells made a motion to accept the amended minutes from 2-27-14. The vote was 7-0-0 with 7 being present.

Meeting No. 25, March 3, 2014

Mr. Behn and Mr. Allen requested corrections to the minutes. Mr. Wells made a motion to accept the amended minutes from 3-3-14. The vote was 6-0-1 with 7 being present (abstention: Kaiser).

Meeting No. 26, March 6, 2014

Mr. Behn and Ms. Rosenblum Senie requested corrections to the minutes. Mr. Wells made a motion to accept the amended minutes from 3-6-14. The vote was 6-0-1 with 7 being present (abstention: Kaiser).

Meeting No. 27, March 15, 2014 (ATM)

Mr. Wells made a motion to accept the minutes from 3-15-14 (ATM). The vote was 7-0-0 with 7 being present.

Call to Order/Open Forum

Town Moderator, John E. Arnold was present to discuss his first Annual Town Meeting (ATM) as Moderator. He wanted to thank the Committee for all of their hard work leading up to the ATM and that he appreciated having the Report & Recommendations book as he prepared for his first ATM as Moderator. Mr. Arnold mentioned that there were three AFC members whose terms were currently up – Mr. Wells, Mr. Rauch and Ms. Rosenblum Senie. He said that Mr. Wells and Mr. Rauch will be reappointed and letters will go out this week. However, Ms. Rosenblum Senie wanted to resign due to other obligations. Mr. Arnold thanked Ms. Rosenblum Senie for her work on the Committee. Mr. Arnold will begin the process of filling her spot and also the one year term left on his position.

Board of Health – Discussion of Landfill Related Costs

Acting Director of Public Health, Steve Baccari, along with Board of Health (BOH) member, Dr. Alan Ehrlich, met with the Committee to discuss landfill related costs. Mr. Baccari passed around a handout on Trash Data that he had assembled. He reviewed the data on the handout and also provided an overview of how residents can dispose of their trash. Either a dump sticker can be purchased from the BOH and used at the transfer station, or residents can go through Tidy Town. Mr. Baccari pointed out that Tidy Town bins are dumped in to Town trash and counted towards the total. The Tidy Town fee only covers Tidy Town picking up and transporting trash to the transfer station. Since Tidy Town has over 1,500 customers that do not have to visit the transfer station, that helps alleviate traffic. Also, Tidy Town customers pay an additional fee to have their recyclables picked up. Mr. Baccari mentioned that recycle stickers are free through the Town and encouraged residents to drop off their recyclables at the transfer station. He pointed out that for every ton of trash that is recycled and not dumped in the landfill, the Town does not get charged and saves \$113 per ton. Currently the Town budgets for 5,600 tons of trash per year. To better capture additional information on who is purchasing dump stickers, the BOH will be installing a new database in May. The new database will allow the BOH to track whether people are buying a primary sticker, secondary sticker, senior sticker, or replacement sticker.

Dr. Ehrlich mentioned that he has gotten feedback that the AFC would like to see more money raised from the sale of dump stickers. He wanted to have this meeting so the BOH could receive guidance from the AFC in getting the fees close to a fair value. Dr. Ehrlich felt it was important to first understand the relative costs involved between operating the transfer station and fees for trash disposal. The transfer station costs about \$180,000/year to operate versus trash disposal that costs about \$113/per ton. Harvey's costs can be split between operating the transfer station and transporting the trash to Wheelabrator. Since Westborough dumps about 5,600 tons of trash, the amount spent on just trash disposal – combining Harvey's costs for transporting the trash and the fee charged by Wheelabrator for dumping the trash – is over half a million dollars. The Town currently pays about \$425,000/year to Wheelabrator for trash disposal alone. Dr. Ehrlich questioned what percentage of trash should be paid for by users. He asked if the AFC was looking for 100% or a lesser percentage. Dr. Ehrlich pointed out that commercial users pay 100% for their trash removal since only residential trash is counted in the Town total, and Mr. Baccari confirmed that commercial trash is dumped separately. Dr. Ehrlich wanted to discuss the implications if they were to substantially raise fees. He mentioned that if dump sticker fees were raised drastically then residents may opt to go to Tidy Town. Similarly, if Tidy Town had a large surcharge imposed, then residents would purchase dump stickers. Either way, the trash is still being dumped at the landfill. Dr. Ehrlich felt raising the fees for dump stickers and adding a surcharge for Tidy Town customers needed to be done in tandem to cover the larger cost of user fees.

Mr. Behn mentioned the difficulty of figuring out what to charge for and what to subsidize. He pointed to core municipal services like police, fire, schools, and health as being required to run a community. However, sewer and water are paid for 100% by the users. Mr. Behn suggested that trash disposal could operate the same way and, if we are trying to recoup the cost of the whole service, then we would have to raise fees to cover all of the costs. Mr. Behn referred to Southborough and said that they charge their residents \$250/year for trash disposal. Mr. Rauch pointed out that there's no alternative to using the dump and that a concern of having large user fees would be if residents started burning trash in their yard or burying it. Dr. Ehrlich agreed and said one worry is that people will try to find alternative methods to dispose of trash if it becomes too expensive. He mentioned that the Town had looked at a "pay as you throw" program but residents didn't like it and preferred paying one fee. Ms. Rosenblum Senie fails to see the subsidy argument since everyone's trash is being disposed of and disposing of trash isn't optional – residents are paying through a combination of user fees and taxes. When asked about condominium and apartment complexes, Mr. Baccari pointed out that those are considered commercial accounts and those complexes pay for dumpsters and trash removal separately. A dwelling of four families or less is marked as residential and would count toward Town trash.

In looking at reducing costs, Mr. Rauch mentioned that Harvey's fees don't appear excessive and haven't gone up much. Mr. Baccari said that Harvey's have only raised their fees slightly over the years. Mr. Baccari said that the Wheelabrator contract that the Town signed is for 20 years and has about 10 years left on it and the cost the Town is charged by Wheelabrator is tied to the Consumer Price Index. Mr. Wells pointed out that trash disposal costs have been increasing about 2.5% per year, or 5% every two years. Mr. Behn thought it would be helpful to have the Board of Health back in October with additional data so the impact of any changes can be identified. Mr. Arnold suggested having an expiration date on recycle stickers or users being required to show proof of residency. Mr. Behn felt it would be a good idea to provide a recycle sticker to residents in their tax bill and have the year imprinted on it so the sticker would be valid for that year only. Dr. Ehrlich agreed since, if a resident had a recycle sticker, it may encourage additional recycling.

Mr. Wells provided a handout that he prepared analyzing the landfill subsidy. Mr. Wells reviewed the handout and mentioned that his records indicate that the BOH sells an average of 3,000 full price dump stickers. If the landfill expenditures continue at the current growth rate, and dump sticker fees are only raised by \$20 every two years, then the subsidy rate will increase as shown in Mr. Wells' analysis. Mr. Wells said that if we are trying to maintain a 70% subsidy rate then dump sticker fees need to have a larger increase in order to keep pace and he provided projected increase requirements. Dr. Ehrlich asked what was comfortable – a 70% subsidy with users paying 30%? Mr. Wells would like to see more of a 60/40 split. Mr. Behn and Mr. Wells informed Mr. Baccari and Dr. Ehrlich that for every \$100,000 spent in the Town budget, it equates to about \$13.00 in additional taxes per single family household. Regarding taxes, Dr. Ehrlich pointed out that, for FY'13, 36% of trash disposed came from businesses. Since Westboro has a single tax rate, Mr. Behn mentioned that commercial accounts are helping with trash fees because they are paying

taxes and also paying for a dumpster and tipping fees separately. Mr. Behn said that if the Town is paying about \$500,000 to subsidize trash then taxpayers are paying about \$65 per year – and that would be the cost to individuals and businesses. Mr. Wells was concerned that trash removal is becoming one of the larger cost departments and wanted to get to a reasonable and fair rate in comparison to the rest of the Town budget. Mr. Behn agreed and hoped that by raising fees, those receipts would offset the large budget number for trash disposal.

Mr. Baccari and Dr. Ehrlich felt that the AFC raised some interesting issues and provided helpful information to bring back to the BOH for discussion. Dr. Ehrlich said if there were any other items that the AFC would like tracked, please let them know.

Review and Discussion of 2014 Annual Town Meeting (ATM) Process

Budget: The Committee discussed preparation of the budget for the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) and what could have been improved upon. Mr. Rauch thought there were some departments that didn't seem to be involved in the budgeting process. Mr. Wells suggested that the AFC could send out a letter prior to the ATM reminding those in charge of a department that budget season is coming and they need to be prepared and involved in the process. Mr. Wells felt that departments should start looking at their budgets after the Special Town Meeting. There was a question as to how much budgets are discussed between the Town Manager and department heads. It was pointed out that the Town Manager's recommendation on budgets is posted the first of the year. Mr. Arnold said that historically it has not been the role of the AFC to inform department heads if there's a discrepancy in budgets between what the Town Manager supports and what a department is requesting. However, Mr. Arnold felt it would be within the AFC's role to point out any discrepancies between the two. Ms. Rosenblum Senie thought it would be appropriate to ask the Town Manager to have a discussion with a department head if there isn't agreement on a particular budget since the AFC liaison's job becomes more difficult if they are the ones pointing it out. Mr. Behn suggested that the budget book be sent out sooner and also posted online so department heads aren't surprised. Mr. Rauch and Ms. Kaiser felt that some departments seemed less prepared than they should be when meeting with the AFC. Mr. Behn thought that department heads should know early on what's being proposed by the Town Manager for their budgets and if there are any differences. Mr. Wells proposed that if there was a department without any changes to their budget that perhaps the liaison could handle and not necessarily have the department head in to discuss. Mr. Arnold felt it might be helpful to have the budget motion in the R&R book in bold print. He also thought it would be beneficial for residents to review the R&R book prior to Town Meetings. Mr. Wells suggested that perhaps Mr. Arnold could ask if there were any questions when reviewing the budget. Mr. Allen mentioned that residents should know that it is acceptable to say "question" when reviewing the budget and that doesn't necessarily mean they are proposing a new number.

Articles: Mr. Arnold liked the charts that were provided in the R&R book on articles such as #9. Mr. Allen felt the footnotes after each Department in the table for the Budgets were helpful and thought maybe to go a little slower so residents can digest the contents of the footnotes. Mr. Rauch felt that Articles 19 & 20 weren't publicized and discussed enough. Mr. Arnold thought the conversation stayed focused on what the issues were all about for the most part. Mr. Rauch mentioned that he felt sometimes the discussion went around and around. Mr. Arnold said he would brush up on the "end debate" request and inform residents that if they are hearing the same discussion then "end debate" should be invoked. Mr. Wells asked if there could be a time limit placed on debate and Mr. Arnold said he would look in to it. Ms. Rosenblum Senie asked if there was a limit on how long someone could speak. Mr. Arnold said you cannot limit how long someone spoke but he did limit those people with presentations. Mr. Allen thought it would be helpful for the Moderator to keep an eye on how long someone could speak – and if it's in the rules – please invoke a limit to the debate. Mr. Arnold pointed out that if the AFC has something to add or want to convey a new vote during the meeting, let him know. Mr. Arnold brought up electronic voting and mentioned it was much easier having a counted vote on each item. Mr. Arnold said he would have a similar review of the ATM with the Selectmen tomorrow night to get their thoughts.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Behn mentioned that he would like to reorganize the Committee at the next meeting. There are two positions open and it would be helpful to get people on board earlier. Mr. Behn pointed out that the Massachusetts Municipal Association has a program in June that he recommends and finds beneficial for anyone dealing with town finances.

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee minutes
April 7, 2014

Mr. Behn informed the Committee that the next AFC meeting will be Monday, May 5th. However, he had a request from Westborough TV General Manager, Karen Henderson, about using Room 23 at the Forbes Building that same evening. It was suggested that the AFC meeting be moved to the Public Library. Mr. Behn is going to contact Library Director, Maureen Ambrosino, about changing the location of the next AFC meeting to the library.

Ms. Blazejewski reported that the Charter Review Committee will be meeting the first and third Thursday evening of each month from 6-8 p.m. at the DPW Conference Room. There will be liaisons in attendance from various Town Boards and Committees. Ms. Blazejewski will send out an email to AFC members requesting that they review the Charter and get back to her with suggestions for proposed changes.

Mr. Allen provided an update from the Municipal Building Committee. There was a walk through done by MBC members after their meeting on 4/2. Both projects are currently on budget and moving at a pace where they should be completed on time. The new Fire Station is scheduled for a move in date of September of this year, with the demolition of the existing building to follow. The Town Hall is gutted and renovations have begun with an anticipated move in date a year from now. Mr. Allen complimented the MBC and said they have done a great job working with the design team. Future projects include the Gibbons Middle School and renovations of the Forbes Building.

Mr. Behn reminded Committee members about the meeting with the Charrette next Saturday, April 12th. Town residents will meet with the Charrette so they can provide their input and comments for the future use of the former State Hospital land.

Adjournment

Mr. Wells made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:07pm. The vote to adjourn was 7 in favor, with 7 being present.

Document List

Trash Data handout – Steve Baccari

Tidy Town Service/Landfill Subsidy Analysis – Gary Wells

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Thomas
AFC Administrative Assistant