

Members Present: Gary Wells, Chair, Ed Behn, Lisa Blazejewski, Beth Blumberg, Sharon Kaiser, Hank Rauch, Peter Allen, Jim Tepper. Absent: Tara Howard.

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

#### **Call to Order/Open Forum**

There were no requests to address the Committee.

#### **Introduction of new Advisory Finance Committee (AFC) member**

Town Moderator, John Arnold, introduced new AFC member, Beth Blumberg. Ms. Blumberg is replacing Ms. Rosenblum Senie on the Committee. Mr. Arnold wanted to thank Ms. Rosenblum Senie for her many years of service on the AFC. Ms. Blumberg introduced herself and mentioned she has been a Westborough resident for 20 years and has an extensive background in math and education. Mr. Wells suggested some upcoming classes that are available for learning more about municipal finance and will follow up with dates and registration information if Ms. Blumberg or anyone else on the Committee is interested. Ms. Blumberg was welcomed by AFC Committee members. Mr. Arnold wanted to remind the viewing audience about the Special Town Meeting (STM) coming up on October 20<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

##### **Meeting No. 1, July 14, 2014**

Mr. Allen requested a correction to the minutes. Mr. Behn made a motion to accept the amended minutes from 7-14-14. The vote was 5-0-3 with 8 being present (abstention: Rauch, Tepper, Blumberg).

#### **Old Business**

Mr. Wells reminded the Committee about liaison assignments. Mr. Behn mentioned he is interested in the Library and will also stay with the schools. Mr. Wells would like to have liaison assignments in place for budget season. He is still looking for someone on the Committee to become the liaison for both the Conservation Commission and the Planning Board and mentioned that these two groups meet Tuesday evenings. Mr. Behn pointed out that liaisons are only required to go to meetings if it is important such as during the budget season or for budgetary items, and the liaison may be assigned to obtain feedback from a department if necessary during budget season. It was also mentioned that the liaison role gives each department a contact person on the AFC. Mr. Wells said that he has tried to combine liaison assignments that are handled by Town Manager, Jim Malloy, so Mr. Malloy can come in and report on those departments he is responsible for all in one meeting. Mr. Wells pointed out that liaison work is down a bit and felt the new budget process has helped. Mr. Wells also reminded Committee members that Mr. Behn is volunteering as interim Vice Chair of the AFC and he would appreciate someone else taking over that role.

#### **New Business**

Mr. Wells asked Mr. Behn to comment on his findings from the School Department's FY14 End of Year Report that he emailed out to the Committee last month. Mr. Behn distributed a copy of this report to Committee members for discussion. He mentioned that he looked at what was budgeted versus what was actually spent for FY14 and will follow up with Director of Finance and Administration, Irene Oliver, on those line items with a greater than 25% or \$20,000 change. He pointed out that any line item with a positive number or percentage meant that the budget was overspent and line items with a negative number or zero percentage were underspent. For example, Mr. Behn indicated that on Page 1 of 1 where he summarized line items to follow up on – the first line item – Elementary Teachers Lanes/Longevity – this item shows a \$199,636 increase but nothing was spent. Mr. Behn also pointed out that out-of-district tuitions were prepaid up to 3 months. Ms. Kaiser asked what the purpose was for prepaying these tuitions and Mr. Behn said it eliminates some of the surprise of not knowing who will be moving in to the district. Mr. Behn said that if you know you have some of the out of district tuitions prepaid then they can concentrate on funding tuitions for those students who move in to the district that they didn't know about. Mr. Behn mentioned that he'd like to see the School Department closely budget on what is being spent and then there are reserve funds that can be used for unknown expenses.

### **Future Business**

Mr. Wells informed the Committee that he attended the Finance Team meeting this past Tuesday and it looks like the warrant for the Special Town Meeting in October will be a large one. At last count, there were 29 articles and this did not include potentially three articles from the School Department. One of the articles from the School Department could be significant to their salary budget since it deals with pending contract negotiations. Mr. Wells mentioned that the warrant closes September 23<sup>rd</sup> and the School Department may not be ready with a warrant article for their salary accounts. Mr. Wells said that the other two potential articles from the School Department had to do with a capital request that they still need to come forward with, and the third article they didn't elaborate on. Mr. Wells informed the Committee that he has added an AFC meeting on Thursday, September 25<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in Room 23. Since the warrant closes September 23<sup>rd</sup>, Mr. Wells has invited Town Manager, Jim Malloy, to the September 25<sup>th</sup> meeting to go through the articles. Mr. Wells mentioned that there are a lot of little articles with requests of \$5,000- \$10,000 that he'd like to review, and then narrow down the scope after that. Mr. Wells mentioned that the Report & Recommendation book that the AFC compiles would need to be voted on by 10/14 at the latest in order for him to get the information to Curry Printing the following day so Curry can have it printed by 10/20. Mr. Wells noted that there can be a meeting added on October 16<sup>th</sup> if there are still items left to vote on by the AFC. Mr. Wells felt the information from the Finance Team meeting was encouraging and there should be a significant amount of free cash available for some of the smaller articles. Mr. Behn asked Mr. Wells if he has spoken with Town Accountant, Leah Talbot, about getting revised receipt figures for FY15 and Mr. Wells said he is going to follow up with her.

Mr. Wells mentioned the recent walk-throughs at the Hocomonco Pond site and the upcoming meeting scheduled for September 17<sup>th</sup> by the Green Technology Advisory Committee (GTAC). GTAC has been appointed the task of figuring out the reuse of the Hocomonco Pond site and soliciting formal proposals for passive recreational use. Mr. Wells wanted to open up discussion among AFC members as to their thoughts on this subject so he can present FinCom's opinion at the 9/17 meeting. Mr. Wells attended the first walk through and said that he personally liked the idea of solar fields being developed over the two dump sites as previously discussed and proposed. He felt this would provide economic development for the Town and also increase tax revenue and credits. Mr. Wells mentioned the email he forwarded to AFC members about the Town of Sutton where they saved about 25% in energy costs by installing solar arrays. Mr. Wells could also envision using the abandoned roads as walking and biking trails, and the potential for the utilization of the existing building by either the DPW, or as a training site for the Fire Department. Mr. Behn attended both walk-throughs and pointed out that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is ready to release the site. All the clean up that needed to be done is done and they are only getting about 50 gals a month in contaminants. Right now the whole site is fenced in and locked and Beazer has been remediating the site. The EPA doesn't want the fence to come down until there's a plan in place for the site. There was discussion about having baseball or soccer fields on the dump sites instead of solar arrays. However the configuration of the property and significant drop off to the pond may not be conducive to the plan of having sports fields. It was suggested that only the two capped dump sites and the corner of Smith Valve Parkway and Otis Street be used for the solar arrays, which would account for about 9 acres of land on the site and could possibly generate about \$75,000/year in revenue. Mr. Behn said he would like to see the solar arrays, along with the bike and pedestrian trails, and then the remainder of the land turned over to the Conservation Commission. Ms. Kaiser asked what the Conservation Commission would do with the land and if they would leave it as open space. Mr. Behn said that generally the Conservation Commission would maintain the land. Mr. Rauch was concerned with the liability issue and managing the risk of building anything on what was a contaminated site. He mentioned that anyone building anything on the dump sites needed to be careful since he wouldn't want to see the capped areas punctured where hazardous material is buried. Mr. Rauch also wanted Beazer to still be held accountable for clean up. In the event the Town chooses to build something on the site, Mr. Rauch didn't want to see full responsibility of any potential clean up reverting back solely to the Town. Mr. Rauch also felt that the building on the property wouldn't be "free" since it would most likely need to be renovated if the DPW or Fire Department used it. Mr. Wells mentioned that he saw a presentation on other clean-up sites that have had solar arrays built on them and it has been successful. Mr. Rauch pointed out that he has seen solar arrays placed on hazardous waste sites where they don't excavate and instead put down a concrete slab and then build on top of that. He would like to make sure the Request for Proposal (RFP) was clear on how the arrays should be installed. Mr. Allen wanted to applaud the efforts of GTAC and felt they were doing a great job of backing away from an initial adversarial response and instead are finding a way for the bike trail, charm bracelet, and solar potential to exist together. Mr. Allen was optimistic about the continued work of all parties coming together and felt this was something he could support in an article. Ms. Kaiser agreed and would

like to see mixed use of this land. Mr. Tepper was curious as to the amount of revenue that would come from taxes. Mr. Wells thought that it wouldn't be significant since the arrays would be taxed as personal property to the solar company who would still own them. Mr. Tepper said that he likes mixed use of the land and he was glad there wasn't a rush to come to a decision last spring. Ms. Blumberg added that she would like to see solar arrays over the capped areas and not sports fields where children would be. Ms. Blazejewski was on board with everyone else. She felt that when this subject was brought up last Spring that it was rushed, but now sees a good outcome in finding a mixed purpose for this land that really can't be used for anything else. Mr. Behn pointed out that they have been testing the wells and insect life on this land and have seen healthy results. Mr. Rauch asked if use of the Hocomonco Pond site would come up at the Special Town Meeting in October and Mr. Wells said he thought it would most likely come up in the spring. Mr. Wells also mentioned the general proposal authorizing the Selectmen to contact a solar company to solicit an RFP and get engineering plans. He thought that the framework for who uses what parts of the land would be laid out in the RFP in order to accommodate everyone. Mr. Wells will get back to GTAC Chairperson, Leigh Emery, with the general opinions and thoughts of FinCom.

#### **Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports**

Mr. Allen provided a brief update from last Wednesday's Municipal Building Committee (MBC) meeting. The new Fire Department is moving ahead with a potential September 30<sup>th</sup> move in date. He noted that the electrical contractor is behind on his work and there is a question as to whether he'll catch up over the next few weeks. Mr. Allen mentioned that there have been very few Change Orders incurred so the project is still operating within the contingency. Regarding the Town Hall renovations, Mr. Allen said that by the end of November the outside should look beautiful as the clock tower is replaced, the Town Hall sign refurbished, and the front entrance re-done. Renovations on the inside of the Town Hall will continue with a conclusion hopefully in May of 2015.

Mr. Tepper reported on the Gibbons School Building Committee. He mentioned that they are still reviewing the cost of renovations, which he said - at \$18 Million - was double what was approved at Town Meeting. Mr. Tepper thought that construction would start in 2016 and be completed in mid-2018. They are starting to look at schematic diagrams. Mr. Tepper pointed out that they are looking for a 43% reimbursement from the State for the cost of this project. He said that the classrooms will contain more technology and they are considering the installation of air conditioning in the building. Student enrollment is being projected forward. Issues and complications that present themselves are being dealt with as they come up. Mr. Tepper felt the project was moving a little slowly and thought they'd be further along after two years.

Ms. Blazejewski stated that the Capital Review Committee was off in the month of August, so she has nothing new to report. She mentioned she missed the last Charter Review meeting but that they are still in the process of collecting data.

Mr. Wells encouraged AFC members to take a copy of the Standard & Poor's report that was made available at tonight's meeting. The report provides a narrative on the financial standing of the Town. Mr. Wells pointed out the low interest rate received by the Town on its recent borrowings due to the increase in the Town's bond rating to triple A (AAA) status and its favorable financial report.

#### **Adjournment**

Mr. Behn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 8-0-0 in favor, with 8 being present.

#### **Document List**

FY14 Westborough Schools – End of Year Report  
Standard & Poor's Report on the Town of Westborough

Respectfully submitted,  
Jessica Thomas  
AFC Administrative Assistant