

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

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

Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Approval of Past Minutes:

Meeting No. 10, December 1, 2014

Mr. Behn, Mr. Tepper, and Mr. Arnold requested corrections to the minutes. Mr. Tepper made a motion to approve the amended minutes from 12-1-14. Voted: 9-0-0.

Approval of AFC Message for Town Report

There was discussion about the Advisory Finance Committee's (AFC's) message for the 2014 Annual Town Report. The AFC's message was emailed out to Committee members by Mr. Wells for their review. There were some changes made that Mr. Wells indicated on the latest version of the message. Mr. Wells was looking for final approval from the Committee before submitting for print. Mr. Behn made a motion to approve the AFC's message for the 2014 Annual Town Report. Voted: 9-0-0.

Review of Liaison Assignments for Budget Process

The current liaison assignment list was reviewed. There weren't any changes requested so the assignments will stay as is. Mr. Behn suggested that if there is a new liaison assigned to a department that an email is sent introducing the department head to the new liaison. Mr. Wells said he may send emails introducing the AFC's newest members – Ms. Howard and Ms. Blumberg – to the departments they are covering.

FY2016 Budget & ATM preparation schedule and related items

Mr. Wells mentioned the revision to the AFC's meeting schedule and that the correct date for the Annual Town Meeting is March 14, 2015. Mr. Wells pointed out that Town Manager, Jim Malloy, will be meeting with the AFC on January 26th to go over the Town's budget in its entirety. The School Department and School Committee will meet with the AFC on January 29th. Beginning February 2nd, the AFC will begin meeting every Monday and Thursday evening up until the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) as needed. Mr. Wells reminded Committee members that Mr. Malloy is scheduled to give his presentation on the Town's budget to the Board of Selectmen on January 13th. Regarding the Report & Recommendation book that the AFC generates, Mr. Wells is targeting March 5th to the 9th for final approval so that it can be printed in time for the ATM. There was discussion over the number of AFC meetings between now and the ATM, and some concern that there wouldn't be time to cover everything. Mr. Wells said he would have a better idea of the size of the warrant after the Board of Selectmen meeting on January 13th. Mr. Wells asked Committee members – if they were in agreement – that if a department has no changes other than step and cost of living increases, then the liaison can make a report rather than invite in that department. The AFC ran through the list of departments to see who should be asked to come in to meet with the AFC. The following departments were selected for meeting with the AFC: Police, Fire/Ambulance, DPW, Council on Aging, Assabet Valley, Library, Historical Commission, Town Treasurer, Economic Development, Country Club, and MIS/GIS. Mr. Wells said that Mr. Malloy would cover his departments such as Personnel and Town Clerk. Town Treasurer, Joanne Savignac will cover Debt. There was a suggestion to schedule the three larger departments – Police, Fire/Ambulance, and DPW – early, and then the other departments could be scheduled around those dates.

AFC Terms and Glossary document

Mr. Wells wanted to discuss the glossary as a separate document. The draft he created is 12 pages and he added a statement in front from the AFC. Mr. Wells noted that the last R&R book was 40 pages and included the information in the glossary document. Mr. Wells asked Committee members for any additions, subtractions or edits. There was a suggestion to make the booklet smaller in size. Mr. Behn and Ms. Howard had some edits. Mr. Behn mentioned having sections with titles to distinguish between the glossary terms and the Town Moderator's notes. He also felt that a title should be added on the front page and then say "published by" the Advisory Finance Committee. Mr. Behn thought that the notes in the Town Moderator's section should be more general so the booklets didn't have to be printed as frequently and could last two to four meetings before having to reprint. Mr. Wells said he would continue to tweak the glossary document so it will be ready for the ATM in March. Mr. Allen suggested adding a Table of Contents. Ms. Howard said she had some spelling and grammar corrections. Mr. Behn felt that the AFC Message to Town Voters belonged in the R&R book and not in the glossary. Mr. Wells mentioned that the Association of Town Finance had a more extensive glossary and Ms. Blazejewski suggested referring people to that document if they need it. Mr. Tepper mentioned that the challenge is to get people to read the glossary in advance so they are prepared when they walk in the door at the ATM. Both Ms. Kaiser and Ms. Blazejewski suggested adding the glossary to the Town's website. Voters could either take the glossary home for future reference, or Ms. Howard suggested having a box or bucket to collect the glossaries at the end of the Town meetings for those people who may not remember to bring it back.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Allen reported on the Municipal Building Committee. He attended their last meeting on 12/17 and at that time they were in the process of demolishing the old Fire Station and completing Punch List items at the new station. Initially there were close to 500 items on the Punch List with a few line items in dispute. The majority of the remaining work will involve completing the new parking lot where the old station was and putting up the Memorial Park. Mr. Allen mentioned that one thing that was of concern was a glitch with the Public Announcement (PA) system. He said that they are working on getting a sound engineer in to determine what fix is needed. Regarding the Town Hall, there was discussion about the schedule and there is no longer optimism that the move in date will be in May due to a transformer issue with National Grid. They are hoping to get this issue resolved, but the move in date could possibly be as late as August. Mr. Allen mentioned that the transformer issue has been a frustrating delay to both the Contractor and the Town.

Mr. Tepper reported on the Gibbons School Building Committee. He mentioned that the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) meets on the 14th of January and will vote on the final proposal that was submitted for the Gibbons renovation project. Mr. Tepper said that there will likely be a warrant article in the ATM from the School Department where they'll be looking for 56% of the approximately \$27 million cost of this project, since they'll receive about 44% reimbursement from the State. Mr. Behn asked if there was a summary budget that could be distributed to AFC members and Mr. Tepper said he would scan and email to the Committee. Mr. Wells pointed out that this subject can be discussed when the School Department and School Committee meet with the AFC on January 29th.

Ms. Blazejewski discussed the Capital Expenditures Committee. She referred to the AFC's budget binders that each member received and pointed out that in the back was the Capital Expenditures five year plan and a list of the proposed projects. Ms. Blazejewski mentioned that the Capital Expenditures Committee only meets for one season to assemble this information, so they are done meeting until the fall.

Regarding the Charter Review Committee, Ms. Blazejewski said they are continuing to meet on the first and third Thursday of each month at the new Fire Station. They have a report to present to the Board of Selectmen on January 13th to update them on where the Committee is at after 9 months. Ms. Blazejewski doesn't think they'll be presenting anything for deliberation at the ATM in March. Mr. Behn asked if they have been clarifying the scope

of work they should handle and Ms. Blazejewski said they have since a few things have come up that they aren't sure fall under their control.

Comments and Concerns – Committee Members

Mr. Behn informed the Committee that he is waiting for numbers from the schools so he can produce reports for the AFC. The schools are looking at a 2.56% increase to their FY'16 budget. He has had a conversation with Irene Oliver, Director of Finance and Administration, and requested the numbers for their upcoming budget. Mr. Behn mentioned that the biggest area where there have been reductions is for tuitions for out-of-district students, which is going down 53% due to grants and circuit breaker funds. Mr. Behn said his concern is that there aren't sufficient reserves for out of district costs. He went back and did an analysis and found that the State reimburses 72% of special education costs - specifically for out of district tuitions. Mr. Behn pointed out that in FY'15 Westborough had the second highest expense for out of district special needs students. He said that 1% of special education students on average are placed out of district within a school system, and that Westborough was only at 1.1%, however the cost for our out of district students was high. Mr. Behn would like to know why the cost for our special needs students was so expensive. He hopes to have the final school numbers by the end of the week. Ms. Howard mentioned that even with lowering the tuition, if one special needs student moves in to town, it could increase out of district tuition costs drastically. Mr. Behn said that's what he wants to verify – that reserves are there in case students with special needs move in to Westborough. Mr. Behn would also like to know what makes up the student base for special needs, without knowing personal or confidential information, to see if things could be done such as negotiations or corroborations to lower costs. It was noted that the schools salaries line item is increasing due to 14 additional positions that have been added, but this increase has been mitigated by lowering the out of district tuitions, among other things. It was also mentioned that technology is going up. Ms. Howard pointed to the state mandated testing and the need for increased technology.

Public Reminders for Viewers

None

Adjournment

Mr. Behn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 9-0-0 in favor, with 9 being present.

Document List

Advisory Finance Committee Message for Annual Town Report
FY2015 AFC Liaison and Committee Interests/Assignments
Westborough Advisory Finance Committee FY2015 Meeting Schedule (Revised)
AFC Terms and Glossary Document

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Thomas
AFC Administrative Assistant