

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

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

### **Open Forum**

Mr. Wells suspended open forum for tonight's meeting since there will be an extended open forum tomorrow evening, 2/12, and also on 2/19.

### **Approval of Past Minutes:**

#### **Meeting No. 13, January 29, 2015**

Mr. Behn requested a correction to the minutes. Mr. Behn made a motion to approve the amended minutes from 1-29-15. Voted: 5-0-1 (abstention: Kaiser). Mr. Allen and Ms. Blumberg were not present for this vote.

### **Chief Gordon – Police Department**

**FY2016 Budget:** Chief Gordon informed the Committee that his salaries and wages line item has increased by about 2.4%. This increase is due to contract agreements along with step and cost of living increases. He also mentioned that his expenses have risen. He noted that his communications line item has gone up by \$960 because their contract with Cyber Comm increased by that amount. Mr. Wells asked about the increase to office supplies and Chief Gordon said he raised it this year by \$4,000 to reflect actual spending, since this line item has historically been overspent. The Chief also pointed out the uniform line item for clothing and said this was contractual. He mentioned that his employees usually wait until May to spend their clothing allowance. Mr. Allen asked Chief Gordon if Westborough was looking in to some sort of telephone reassurance program for seniors and pointed out the recent storms. Chief Gordon said we used to have a program that would call seniors every morning and, if there was no answer, an alarm would go off and an officer would be dispatched. The Chief mentioned the system was about \$18,000 twenty years ago but they received grants from the State to offset the cost. That system is now outdated and no longer supported and these days the Police Department receives nothing in grants from the State. Mr. Allen suggested taking another look at this program since it would encourage seniors to stay in their homes. Chief Gordon felt that may be something that the Council on Aging could find senior volunteers to support.

**ATM – Warrant Articles:** Article 8I – Chief Gordon informed the Committee that they are looking to purchase three new cruisers for the upcoming fiscal year. They received a quote from MHQ, who is on the state bid list, and they expect the cost to be approximately \$139,348.50 for three new SUV police vehicles. He mentioned that the SUV cruisers are able to make it to calls in all types of weather. They will analyze their current fleet of cruisers and trade in three of their oldest or those in the worst shape. Chief Gordon mentioned that they purchased two new cruisers this year. They haven't picked up these new vehicles yet since they are trying to run the current fleet as long as they can, but they will likely pick them up in March. Chief Gordon pointed out that they have a 2008 Ford Expedition with 56,000 miles on it that will go to the DPW, which they could have traded in. The Chief suggested looking back at prior articles where they requested funds for vehicles since they didn't spend the whole amount. He said there may be money left to return to the Town or he could use those funds toward offsetting this cost. Ms. Blazejewski asked if he'll ever get to the point where he'll only be requesting one cruiser per year. Chief Gordon said that is unlikely though he could space them out each year by asking for two annually rather than replacing three at once. He mentioned that the DPW does a tremendous job in caring for the vehicles and are constantly performing regular maintenance so they tend to last longer.

Chief Gordon informed the Committee that they had an officer leave so they will be going through the hiring process on Saturday. They are hoping to find a candidate that is already academy trained, since that will save the Town \$3,000 if they don't have to send a new hire through the academy. Mr. Wells asked if that could be a

requirement. Chief Gordon said that limits his choices and quality of candidates. He hired a firm from Grafton that will administer a written test and a physical agility test. Those candidates that pass both tests are then interviewed, references are checked, and the Chief recommends the best one to the Selectmen for approval. He noted that his last two hires did not cost the Town any additional money since they were both already academy trained.

#### **Snow/Ice Deficit Spend Request**

Mr. Wells said that he received a request from DPW Business Administrator, Maria-Elaina Riggieri, for an additional deficit spend in the amount of \$100,000 for expenses and \$25,000 in wages. Ms. Riggieri let Mr. Wells know that they were operating at a deficit and that those figures didn't include the recent storm from February 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>. Since this is the second request for \$125,000, Mr. Behn noted that this would wipe out the entire AFC Reserve Fund. Ms. Blazejewski asked if the State will reimburse towns if a State of Emergency was declared. Town Manager, Jim Malloy, wasn't sure what amount towns may receive for monetary assistance, though he mentioned that snow removal equipment was made available. He did say there was a possibility of receiving money and that Ms. Riggieri is checking with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to see if funds are available. Mr. Behn made a motion to authorize the DPW to deficit spend in the amount of \$100,000 for expenses and \$25,000 in salaries and wages for snow and ice removal. Voted: 8-0-0.

#### **Jim Malloy – Town Manager**

**FY2016 Budget:** Mr. Wells read through the list of Town departments and asked Committee members to indicate which budgets they had questions on to review with Town Manager, Jim Malloy.

**Board of Selectmen/Town Manager:** Mr. Malloy explained to the Committee that he gets frequent requests from department heads asking if they can send their employees to seminars or training programs. Since these courses aren't part of a degree program, there is no money in the budget to cover such requests. Mr. Malloy said that when he was Town Manager in Sturbridge they set aside \$20,000 to cover professional development. Mr. Malloy felt that outside training would be especially helpful for employees who are promoted within a department, since it is one thing to have knowledge about the department but another thing to be putting together budgets and dealing with human resource issues for example. Mr. Malloy thought that the additional training would help expedite the learning curve for employees promoted to a supervisory role. Mr. Behn asked if this would cover all departments, including the schools, and Mr. Malloy said it would but that he would be approving all requests. Mr. Malloy mentioned that the Personnel Board reimburses tuition for degree programs only. Mr. Wells pointed out that the Town pays to train Fire, Police, and school personnel, so he felt that it was a good idea to offer such training to other employees for professional enhancement. Ms. Blumberg asked if requests for professional development would strictly apply to Town employees or could it also cover Town Boards. Mr. Malloy thought that it would just be for Town employees, though there may be an instance it could apply to a Town Board such as the Planning Board. Mr. Behn mentioned that some Boards could budget for those types of expenses as the AFC does with the registration cost for attending the annual Association of Town Finance Committees meeting.

**Legal:** Mr. Allen recognized Mr. Malloy's efforts in finding an area where the Town could save money and mentioned that the Town of Millbury is looking to do something similar to what we did and replace their legal department with outside counsel. He asked how it was going to work without having a full time attorney on Town staff. For example, Mr. Allen mentioned the easements for the bike trail and asked how the Town's access to legal advice will occur. Mr. Malloy said that he has had opportunities in prior jobs to view two instances where legal work was done in-house, and two instances where legal work was contracted out. He mentioned that requests for legal advice would come through his office. Mr. Malloy said that some requests that he gets aren't even of a legal nature. Mr. Malloy reviews each request and then he can ask very specific questions of the outside legal office that takes less time so we are not paying someone \$200/hr. Mr. Malloy pointed out that some legal documents are standard – for example, easements – and they can cut and paste the information in to the document. Mr. Malloy said that if the issue is more complicated, then they would seek help from legal services. Mr. Malloy also mentioned that by going with a larger firm that specializes in many different areas of the law, the Town gets better

legal representation. Mr. Allen pointed out that the Town should save \$75,000. Mr. Malloy said that the acting Town Counsel is shocked at how few legal issues we have had. Mr. Malloy mentioned that there are currently only two big issues – the Library’s HVAC system and the Mill Pond School’s gymnasium floor. Mr. Malloy said other than that they are mostly dealing with easements. Mr. Behn asked about the Town Charter and any legal changes to that document. Mr. Malloy said that they have had an attorney that specializes in this area meet with the Charter Review Committee and he will be drafting some of the language. Mr. Malloy said that he will be working with the Charter Review Committee on any changes, and then he’ll forward those changes off to Town Counsel for review and editing.

**Personnel Board:** Mr. Behn asked about the increase to expenses and if this was for training and education for degree programs. Mr. Malloy said that it was and that tuition reimbursement is in the employee’s contracts. Mr. Malloy indicated that this expense goes up and down depending on who qualifies for reimbursement on an annual basis. Ms. Kaiser asked if this amount could be capped to limit large increases in any one year and Mr. Malloy said that they could make it “first come, first serve”.

**Insurance:** Mr. Behn asked Mr. Malloy if OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) should be included within the Insurance budget or if it made sense to have it as an article or budget item. Mr. Malloy felt that since most of the amount needed is for insurance that it was easier for him to place it within that line item. Mr. Malloy mentioned that if it was an article that we could end up with an hour long debate. Mr. Malloy explained that GASB sets requirements for auditors and we have to be audited each year and we must include the liability for OPEB. He also said that every three years the Town has to hire an actuary to determine what our liability is. Since reporting agencies have threatened to downgrade bonds for those municipalities who aren’t fully funded, Mr. Malloy said we are trying to catch up on OPEB funding. By 2035, it will be a requirement for Towns to be fully funded and Mr. Malloy said that we should have a jump on it by then. Right now we are about \$5-\$6 million behind but still way ahead of other communities, and Mr. Malloy felt that was helpful when our bonds were recently upgraded by Standard & Poor’s. Mr. Behn asked about earning interest on these reserves since we are planning for the future, and Mr. Malloy thought that interest was applied quarterly.

**Council on Aging (COA):** Mr. Allen asked if the expansion of the COA’s transportation services were in the budget. Mr. Malloy said that the Selectmen have not received the report they requested from the COA. Mr. Allen asked if the COA’s request includes the fourth bus driver and Mr. Malloy said it does. Mr. Allen asked Mr. Malloy if he recommends approval since the report due February 1<sup>st</sup> from the COA still has not been received and Mr. Malloy said he does not. Mr. Malloy mentioned that if he gets a copy of the COA’s report, he will forward it to the AFC. Board of Selectmen Chair, George Barrette, asked for the COA’s report by the next BOS meeting. Ms. Blazejewski asked if the BOS commented on whether they’d be in support and Mr. Malloy said that the BOS didn’t say but he thinks they won’t support the request if the report has not been received. Mr. Rauch asked if the COA reports to Mr. Malloy and Mr. Malloy said it does. Mr. Rauch felt that if there was staff that supported the department head then they should be able to have the report done by now.

**Historical Commission:** Ms. Blazejewski pointed out that the Historical Commission didn’t know about the budget decrease to their wages line item that Mr. Malloy was proposing. Mr. Malloy said that was an oversight on his part and that he didn’t contact Historical Commission Chair, Hazel Nourse, directly. Mr. Malloy mentioned that he had sent out an email that budgets were available online and he assumed that those budgets were reviewed. At the BOS meeting last night there was a discussion regarding this issue and Mr. Malloy let them know that he did not contact Ms. Nourse personally so he did so today. Mr. Malloy gave Ms. Nourse his explanation for why he decreased the wages line item and that he had not changed his position from last year. Mr. Malloy mentioned that Westborough is the only town that funds and staffs a Historical Commission and that foot traffic from the general public is non-existent. Even at approximately \$3,000 for annual wages, Mr. Malloy felt that was more than what other towns and communities spend for an Administrative Assistant for a Historical Commission. Ms. Blazejewski asked Mr. Malloy if he was aware of any shift changes between last year and this year since there was a compromise made last year and suggestions given on other ways to help with the decrease in hours for their Administrative Assistant. Mr. Behn recalled that a log was supposed to have been kept over this last year as to

who came in and what type of traffic there was but Mr. Behn wasn't sure if that had been done. Mr. Behn mentioned that some towns use Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds for historic commissions. Mr. Rauch said those funds are only for projects, and Mr. Malloy mentioned that funds from the CPA cannot be used for staffing. Mr. Rauch confirmed that the Historical Commission handled building permits on historical buildings and Mr. Malloy said that they also handle the signage in the downtown area. Mr. Rauch suggested funding the Historical Commission by charging fees like the Building Department does. Mr. Allen asked how Mr. Malloy arrived at 10 hours per month and Mr. Malloy felt that should cover two meetings and two sets of minutes for each month.

**Economic Development Committee (EDC):** Mr. Malloy reviewed the request made last year to hire someone part-time for the EDC and use funds that the Town received from the digital billboards to pay for that person's salary. Mr. Malloy mentioned that the EDC has made tremendous headway by having this part time employee and feels that they could use this person on a full time basis. Mr. Malloy pointed out that Marlborough's EDC has three full time employees. The EDC voted unanimously to submit this request and Mr. Malloy, who is also on the EDC, fully supports having someone full time. He mentioned that the EDC's part time employee has done a good job promoting local businesses, as well as providing fantastic outreach to businesses in town looking to expand. Mr. Malloy said that the EDC's employee was able to meet with two businesses looking to grow by doing some proactive reaching out and now both of these businesses are expanding in Westborough. Mr. Malloy mentioned that the EDC's employee is also working closely with the folks at Astra and trying to recruit other businesses to move in there. Ms. Blazejewski asked if this request needs to go through the Personnel Board and Mr. Malloy said it does and referred to the warrant. Mr. Wells asked what the town received for the electronic billboards and Mr. Malloy said \$10,000 each for the four in town so \$40,000/year that will go back in to the General Fund if this full time position is approved. Mr. Malloy pointed to the success of getting Genzyme to take over space in the old University of Phoenix building, which was 80% vacant but now has 400-500 employees.

Mr. Malloy referred to two memos he sent out. One memo dealt with the budget and changes, which he quickly ran through these changes with the Committee. Mr. Malloy mentioned that the cost for electricity at the new Fire Station is coming in three times larger than what was originally forecasted. Mr. Malloy revised his original estimate from \$14,000/year based on the electric bills received for the last two months in the new building to \$30,000. He also mentioned that the Town should receive net metering credits from the solar farms that the Town is affiliated with. Mr. Malloy explained that these independent solar farms generate electricity, which is sold, and the Town receives a credit on their electric bill. Mr. Malloy said that a separate account will be set up to keep track of the net metering credits. Mr. Malloy mentioned that another adjustment is for the gas bill for the new station. Their first bill was substantially higher than what was expected so he had to revise the number originally estimated from \$12,000/year to \$30,000. Mr. Malloy pointed out that the Worcester Retirement assessment came in as a larger amount due to a shortened schedule and two disability retirements this past year which resulted in an 18% increase that he wasn't planning on. Mr. Malloy said that the Town is looking in to the possibility of running their own retirement program or other alternatives. Mr. Malloy pointed out that his estimate for Assabet Valley Regional came in about \$60,000 less than what he thought. Mr. Malloy also indicated that the gas bill for Forbes is coming in higher than his original estimate. He mentioned that NStar was reading the wrong meter for about thirty years. NStar went back to 1999, which was the last year that they had accurate records for, and charged an assessment of \$71,644.08 (Article 3).

**ATM Warrant Articles:** Mr. Malloy reviewed those articles that the Committee had questions on.

**Article 4:** Mr. Malloy explained how Article 4 would work in reference to the AFC Reserve Fund. He was asked if the AFC Reserve Fund was spent entirely on snow and ice removal how the Committee could replenish the reserve fund, or have future transfers go directly to snow and ice removal if necessary. Mr. Malloy thought that any deficit spending for snow and ice removal could be transferred from the AFC fund at fiscal year-end, and if we've gone over, that amount would come out of next year's reserve fund balance.

**Article 7:** Mr. Malloy pointed out that the table for Article 7 will change.

**Article 8:** Mr. Malloy said that Article 8A will depend on Article 7. Article 8B is an old law, and once the new law is voted and accepted, then they don't need to vote again. Article 8E is for road reconstruction. Mr. Malloy said that he hasn't received the amount the Town will get for Ch. 90 funding so he used the FY15 numbers for now.

**Article 10:** Mr. Malloy mentioned the Gibbons School renovations.

**Article 12:** Article 12H is for a GPS unit that will be used by MIS/GIS and Engineering. Mr. Malloy said that the engineering department uses this piece of equipment extensively and they would have had to replace both units which would have cost more. Now there will be one unit that will be used by both departments. It was also mentioned that the wording in Article 12J should read heaters (plural).

**Article 15:** Mr. Malloy explained that the intent for this article is to replace the lighting downtown with receipts from the Toll Brothers development.

**Article 16:** Mr. Malloy explained that the purpose of this article is to paint the railroad bridge on East Main Street. Lead paint abatement is needed so they will put this job out to bid to see what the cost is. If this job ends up too costly, the Town will look to install a traffic light at Flanders Road and East Main Street. However, Mr. Malloy mentioned that he is hoping they are able to do both of these jobs since they have some funds set aside from other sources.

**Article 26:** Mr. Malloy explained that state law says if you buy new voting equipment that the Board of Selectmen has to approve the new equipment. This article validates the use of the new equipment. Mr. Malloy said that the software for the old equipment is not being supported. Mr. Behn suggested changing the language from "voting equipment" to something like "ballot reader". Mr. Malloy mentioned that there shouldn't be an issue with the legislature validating the new equipment since the last election was uncontested.

Mr. Allen asked about the old Article 26 that was deleted regarding payment of disability bills for Fire and Police personnel. Mr. Malloy said that the article was deleted because it did not have the support of the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Allen mentioned that 40 other towns have accepted this statute so it made him wonder why it was removed from the warrant.

**Debt:** Mr. Malloy discussed the impact of debt on the budget. He referred to his handout where one graph showed a goal of staying within 7% of the operating budget. The other graph he included showed a goal of staying within \$5.5 million in payments or less. He said we would go over that amount if all building projects proposed were done. Mr. Malloy mentioned that it would be another 6 months to a year before going out to bid on the Gibbons project, so we wouldn't know the amount of that project until then. Mr. Malloy said that most of the work that will be done at Gibbons will take place over the summer of 2016 and 2017. Mr. Malloy pointed out that the MSBA reimbursement column is for the high school and Mill Pond school projects and that now the MSBA pays the money up front. Mr. Behn mentioned that for every \$100,000 borrowed there is a \$13 increase on resident's tax bill but that this increase shouldn't hit until FY2018. Mr. Behn was concerned with Astra leaving Westborough and an \$83 million dollar loss in their personal property valuation which could result in a \$200 increase to tax bills (assuming today's numbers). Mr. Wells thought that the Town may have been better off doing the Gibbons renovations ourselves since we didn't get everything we wanted with this project and were forced to do other things. Mr. Rauch pointed out that we are basically freezing our capital spending for 3 years, and if a new school comes along, there would be a 10 year freeze. Mr. Malloy mentioned that we may have to look at a new school as a "debt exclusion". Mr. Allen asked if a new Recreation Center should be part of the presentation since he heard that we may be able to use school space. There was a discussion over whether all programs that are currently running should be included – for example adult leagues – since they could go play somewhere else like a sports facility or club. Mr. Malloy mentioned that the basketball court in the Forbes building is used 31 hours per week and they would have to make up those hours with the schools. He pointed out that they can't use the high school since that is being used every afternoon. Mr. Malloy said they are looking in to finding space but that

they may only go with youth activities and eliminate adult leagues. He mentioned that a new Recreation Center would have basketball courts and a community room and there is an actual design that has already been done. The plan was to locate the new Rec Center behind the Senior Center but now it would likely be built on the former State Hospital land. Mr. Malloy said he has many meetings scheduled between the schools and Rec Department while they try to figure this out.

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

None

#### **Comments and Concerns – Committee Members**

Mr. Behn mentioned that there are new Revenue & Expenditures figures that have come out. He is trying to reconcile the difference between the old numbers and the new since the increase on the average household tax bill went from 3% to about 2% but expenditures didn't change. Mr. Behn pointed out that local receipts went up along with state aid for roads (Ch. 90 funds) but he thought expenses should go up as well for the DPW. Mr. Behn and Mr. Wells are going to meet to discuss and figure out. Mr. Wells mentioned the surplus in the Overlay account and felt that was being over-budgeted. He distributed an Overlay Reserve Fund report that he created showing the amounts that have been approved for that account versus the amounts that were actually spent going back to 2009. Mr. Wells mentioned that the Overlay account is used in case there are any tax abatements and any monies needed would come out of that fund. He felt that the amount that hasn't been used should be returned to free cash and thought that the Assessor should reduce the rate on what was being set aside. Mr. Behn suggested that Mr. Wells have a conversation with the Town's Assessor and ask her what she thinks the level should be and if she'd consider putting money back in to free cash. Mr. Wells will meet with Ms. Swadel and get back to the Committee regarding his discussion with her.

Mr. Wells mentioned that he is still working on the glossary. Mr. Behn suggested changing the title to "Town Meeting Guidebook" or "Town Meeting Handbook". He proposed having the Town Moderator's notes in the front, the AFC's information in the middle, and the glossary of terms in the back. Mr. Wells said he would continue to tweak the glossary and send out a revised copy for the Committee's review.

#### **Public Reminders for Viewers**

Mr. Wells informed the public that Town elections will take place Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> at the gymnasium in the high school. He noted that all voting has now been consolidated to the high school. Residents should find having one central location easier, less confusing, and there is a cost savings to having only one site.

#### **Adjournment**

Mr. Behn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:17 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 8-0-0 in favor, with 8 being present.

#### **Document List**

Westborough Police Fleet – Police Chief, Alan Gordon

FY2016 Budget Memorandum, FY16 Budget Summary, Financial Revenue & Expenditure Estimates for FY2015, Town of Westborough Budget Worksheets, and FY16 Budget Changes – Town Manager, Jim Malloy

2015 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Memorandum, 2015 ATM Warrant, Debt, and Town Meeting Motions – Town Manager, Jim Malloy

Overlay Reserve Fund Account Summary – Gary Wells

Respectfully submitted,  
Jessica Thomas  
AFC Administrative Assistant