

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

At 7:02 p.m. Mr. Wells called the meeting to order in Room 23 of the Forbes Municipal Building.

Approval of Past Minutes

Meeting No. 14, February 5, 2015

Mr. Wells, Mr. Behn, and Mr. Allen requested corrections to the minutes. Mr. Tepper made a motion to approve the amended minutes from 2-5-15. Voted: 8-0-0 (Mr. Behn wasn't present for this vote).

Country Club – John Arnold

ATM – Budget Items: Mr. John R. Arnold, Chairman of the Country Club Operating Committee (CCOC), met with the AFC to discuss the CCOC's FY16 budget and warrant article. He mentioned that the Golf Professional's contract was renegotiated for a 3 year term, which syncs with the Groundskeeper's contract cycle. Mr. Arnold pointed out that the new contract allows for an early termination if the arrangement isn't working. He also mentioned that the contract is for about \$57,000 per year which represents a base salary of \$42,000 plus approximately \$15,000 for greens fees (10% of the total collected). Ms. Blazejewski asked what made up the indirect costs. Mr. Arnold said this figure is the cost the Town charges for processing the Club's receivables, payables, and payroll. Ms. Howard asked if there was a wait list for members. Mr. Arnold said that the Country Club had a wait list up until about 6 years ago - like most area clubs did - but since the recession of 2008/2009, membership has been slightly down. He mentioned that many private courses are opening up to the public in order to attract members. Mr. Arnold pointed out that there is about \$317,000 in the Country Club Enterprise Fund that they are slowly picking away at. About \$12,000 was used last year to make up the shortfall between revenue and expenses. Ms. Howard asked about the cost of greens fees and what was currently being charged. Mr. Arnold said greens fees were raised this year to \$30/round. There was a question over high school use and Mr. Arnold said that both the boys and girls high school golf teams use the course. He also wanted to mention that Westborough's course is in excellent shape. He has played many of the local courses and ours is the best. Mr. Arnold reviewed the membership breakdown from last year. He noted there were 175 junior members, which included both residents and non-residents. The membership fee for juniors used to be \$250/year but they reduced it to \$125/year.

ATM – Warrant Article: Mr. Arnold reviewed Article 14 in the warrant for improvements to the Country Club golf course. The \$51,000 transfer that is being requested will be used to correct the pathways near the clubhouse so traffic flows better. Mr. Arnold noted that there was money left over from other articles that is designated for a new rough mower since the one they currently have is getting old and will need to be replaced.

Historical Commission – Hazel Nourse

ATM – Budget Items: Hazel Nourse, Chairman of the Historical Commission, along with members of the Commission, met with the AFC to discuss their FY16 budget. Ms. Nourse noted that for the second year in a row, Town Manager, Jim Malloy, is proposing a further reduction in hours for their Administrative Assistant. Under Mr. Malloy's proposal, their Admin would only attend monthly meetings and generate minutes from those meetings. Ms. Nourse noted that last year Mr. Malloy's argument was that other towns don't have a Historical Commission. Ms. Nourse said that other towns may not have a Historical Commission but they do have a Historical Preservation Commission, or something similar. She also mentioned some of the suggestions given to them last year have not been feasible such as finding volunteers to staff the office or coming up with a future plan for the Commission since they don't know where they will be located in the town. Right now the Historical Commission is operating out of the bottom floor of the Library while the Town Hall is being renovated. Ms.

Nourse brought a map that was given out to AFC members showing the historical district in the downtown area. She went through the tasks that the Historical Commission provides assistance with in the community such as helping homeowners who want to renovate homes located within the historical district, displaying the Town's archeological collection, and aiding businesses with signage in the downtown area. Ms. Howard asked about the Historical Commission's traffic pattern and didn't understand why the Historical Commission didn't have more of a presence in the schools. Ms. Nourse said that they are working on becoming more public and mentioned a video that will air on Westborough TV about the Historical Commission. Mr. Wells appreciated Ms. Nourse's background information that she provided and mentioned last year's reduction to the Historical Commission's budget which changed the hours of the office to three days a week for three hours per day. Mr. Wells wanted to get an idea of what may have been lost by not having the Historical Commission's office open more hours, and asked about a traffic log that the AFC had asked the Historical Commission to keep over the past year indicating the number of phone calls and people coming through the door. Ms. Nourse said that a log was kept and there were about 60-70 inquiries handled over the last year that related mostly to permits and doing research. Mr. Wells was looking for something more quantitative such as whether the Historical Commission helped five people a week, a month, or a year, and also a breakdown of what people were inquiring about such as research, permits, or general questions. Mr. Wells said that no one argues that the Historical Commission has a viable mission but they are trying to figure out what is needed. Mr. Wells pointed out the new office hours of three days a week from 10am-1pm and mentioned that this schedule wouldn't allow school age kids access. Ms. Nourse said that right now their artifacts are in storage so there's nothing for them to see. Mr. Wells said that school kids may come in with research questions. Mr. Wells and Ms. Howard wondered if we were in the business of running a museum. Mr. Wells realizes that the Historical Commission is keeping valuable records, answering questions, and helping with permits, but artifacts may be better off on display in the schools. Mr. Wells noted all of the good things that the Historical Commission does but didn't see what detrimental effect the changes from last year had on the Commission. With more budget cuts proposed for this year, the Commission wouldn't be able to operate at its current level. Ms. Nourse said that they are in a difficult position since they had to move from their old location in the Forbes Building to the bottom floor of the Library. Mr. Rauch asked what their plan was going forward for displays and being open. Ms. Nourse said they didn't have a plan. Mr. Rauch pointed out that the Historical Commission is asking the Town to approve their budget yet they don't have an idea of where they will be located or what their expenses might be. Mr. Rauch felt that the Historical Commission should figure out a plan with what their expenses will be and where they will have an office and then come back and ask for approval of their budget. Ms. Blumberg asked about partnering with other Town committees, and perhaps looking for permanent space for the Historical Commission in the Library, Schools, or even the new Fire Station. Ms. Nourse agreed that they need to go to the Selectmen and ask for space. She also mentioned that she spoke with the Schools and agreed to have a display or do a presentation to different classrooms to make the Historical Commission more visible in town. Mr. Allen noted that many departments will be moving back to the Town Hall once renovations are complete so they could go back there. However, the Town Manager may want the Historical Commission staffed by volunteers much like the Finance Committee. Mr. Allen pointed out that the Town Manager has said that we are the only town who operates a Historical Commission this way, and Mr. Malloy may want a commission of volunteers with an Administrative Assistant to support the Commission minimally. Ms. Nourse said she would speak with Jim Malloy, or Assistant Town Manager, Kristi Williams, to see if she can get a commitment for space. Mr. Wells mentioned that Ms. Nourse should submit a request for space, a secretary, and the need to be open some amount of time per week to service people, and then lay out some sort of plan to present to the Town. Mr. Wells pointed out that a similar request was made of the Council on Aging (COA) by the Board of Selectmen when the COA asked for a fourth bus driver. Mr. Wells felt that Mr. Malloy and the BOS were trying to let the Historical Commission know, similar to the COA, that they need a plan to support, and that the AFC and Town can support as well, rather than throwing money out there without knowing what the needs are. Mr. Wells suggested that the Historical Commission do some brainstorming between now and Town Meeting and focus on what is best for Westborough regardless of what other towns are doing. Ms. Blumberg mentioned that the Historical Commission may find volunteers by checking with the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. Mr. Tepper pointed out that the Historical Commission should be prepared to present background information on what other towns do for handling the functions of a Historical Commission. There was discussion over the Community Preservation

Act and how it works, along with what the State would match for funds, and that these funds can only be used for specific projects and not for operation costs. Mr. Behn suggested to Ms. Nourse that she find towns similar to Westborough and be prepared to present how they handle the tasks of a Historical Commission. Mr. Behn also pointed out that since Westborough is designated as a repository is there something that we are required to do, or that the Town or State needs to fund. In addition, Mr. Behn asked about signage and whether the Historical Commission could charge a fee to offset costs similar to the fee charged for a building permit. A member of the Commission said that the Historical Commission could not charge a fee for signage. Mr. Behn suggested looking at statutory requirements and checking with Town Counsel for a legal explanation. He also mentioned checking with our State Representative for clarification on what we could charge for such as sign permits versus demolition permits. Ms. Howard pointed out the new documents and objects that were discovered in the Town Clerk's vault at the Town Hall. She said she is 100% behind their mission and cognizant of their predicament, however, even though the Historical Commission is only a small part of the budget, they still need to justify what they spend. Ms. Howard mentioned that there needs to be records to support the need for a Historical Commission. Mr. Allen agreed with Ms. Howard and said that there needs to be justification for having an Administrative Assistant which is why the AFC asked for a log. Ms. Nourse said they do have a log that she will get to AFC members prior to Town Meeting. Mr. Tepper looked at the Town's website and the mission for the Historical Commission and mentioned that it doesn't say anything about being a museum and displaying artifacts. Mr. Tepper asked Ms. Nourse if their mission has morphed beyond that of a Historical Commission. Ms. Nourse said that the Historical Commission is mandated to protect historical buildings, properties, structures, and cemeteries. Mr. Tepper mentioned that it doesn't look like they need a large space to perform those functions. Ms. Nourse said that over the last 35 years Westborough has become a repository and she thinks that prior Historical Commission Chairs welcomed these artifacts so now they have a large collection. Mr. Behn asked if that was the direction the Historical Commission should be focused on (preservation of artifacts) rather than statutory requirement. Ms. Blazejewski felt the Historical Commission needs to do some long range planning. With Town Meeting coming up shortly, Ms. Blazejewski asked Ms. Nourse what the Historical Commission needed for their FY16 budget in order to do what they are required to do for the community. Ms. Blazejewski suggested looking at other historical towns like Concord and Lexington to get an idea of who does the tasks of our Historical Commission such as who is responsible for signage, who takes the phone call from the developer, and if other Historical Commissions have an Administrative Assistant. Ms. Blazejewski said that if other towns have a similar line item then she would support the Historical Commission's budget so that these functions are covered comparably in Westborough. Ms. Nourse said that she is working with both the Design Review Board and the Planning Board to revise bylaws regarding signage. Ms. Nourse said that they would like to accommodate signage requests but at the same time they are trying to preserve the historical character of the downtown area. She is working on revising the signage bylaws since they aren't specific enough. Ms. Nourse hopes to present these revisions at the October Town Meeting. Ms. Blazejewski asked if the Design Review Board could handle signage requests. Ms. Nourse said that the Historical Commission would still deal with signage and she gave the example of the property at 25 West Main Street that is being renovated. Ms. Nourse mentioned that the Design Review Board had jurisdiction over what the building looked like but the Historical Commission had input on the signage. Ms. Blazejewski asked if there was another Town department that could handle signage requests and Ms. Nourse wasn't sure. Last year Ms. Nourse mentioned that the Historical Commission came in with a compromise to their budget and reduced the hours for their Administrative Assistant. Ms. Nourse said that they used to have schools come in and they'd also hold an Open House when the Library had their book sales. Mr. Behn asked if an Administrative Assistant was needed for a school group. He felt that a volunteer who had interest, knowledge, and background on the collection could be utilized or even a teacher that could guide that review. Mr. Behn doesn't see the Admin's function as being a curator guide to groups coming in. Ms. Nourse said that they do need someone who is knowledgeable in the office to help people with research. Mr. Rauch asked what the \$5,000 was for in professional services. Ms. Nourse said that money was being spent refurbishing the headstones in the cemeteries. They have completed work on two cemeteries and are now working on the third. She mentioned that the gravestones were cracked so they had to hire someone to repair and restore the gravestones. Mr. Rauch asked if the Historical Commission was going to ask for \$5,000 every year for gravestone renovation. Ms. Nourse said they would be requesting \$5,000 for gravestone repair until that job is complete since it involves specialized training that the Town's Buildings &

Grounds crew cannot fix. Ms. Blazejewski pointed out that preserving the cemeteries is a function of the Historical Commission. Mr. Behn mentioned finding out what a town like Sudbury or Andover spends on their Historical Commission since they are similar to Westborough. Mr. Behn wanted to determine whether these towns are spending more or less than Westborough. Mr. Wells wanted to know how other towns are dealing with what is mandated. Mr. Wells said that it is coming down to what the Town Manager is proposing, which is to have the Admin attend meetings and take minutes, versus an Admin who is in the office on a regular basis. Regardless of what Mr. Malloy says or what FinCom says, the Historical Commission can get up and present their case at Town Meeting and residents will decide what happens. Mr. Wells felt there had been good discussion and hoped that they had prepared the Historical Commission for questions they may encounter on Town Meeting floor. There was some discussion over the Admin's rate and Mr. Wells acknowledged that the rate for her position is dictated by her classification under the Town's pay scale and also includes STEP and COLA increases from the 15 years she's been working for the Town. Ms. Nourse felt that the Selectmen were making a big deal about their Admin's pay rate. Mr. Wells said that what their Admin makes hourly is of no concern, but rather it comes down to what we need. Mr. Behn explained that the Finance Committee puts out their Report & Recommendation Book based on what they are recommending. If they are recommending something different than what the Historical Commission wants, the Historical Commission can present their case on Town Meeting floor. Ultimately the town residents decide. Mr. Behn explained that the Selectmen are the executive body and have the power and responsibility to run the Town. The Board of Selectmen hires and appoints people for commissions and committees to help them with running the Town. The Finance Committee looks at processes and if they are responsible financially. Mr. Behn said that various departments come up with their own budgets and submit them to the Town Manager – then the Town Manager submits his budget – and then the Finance Committee makes their recommendation. If there is a question over a budget, then that should be directed toward the Selectmen. The Finance Committee asks how much it costs to run a department. Ms. Blazejewski added that Mr. Malloy may get up on Town Meeting floor and justify his recommendation. Mr. Rauch mentioned that Mr. Malloy has been quite articulate on why he feels the Historical Commission can operate on less money. Mr. Tepper suggested that the Historical Commission appoint a person from their Commission to make their presentation at Town Meeting. Mr. Tepper felt they should start with an explanation of what a Historical Commission does, and then the cost, and argue their case. Mr. Tepper said that the Finance Committee is looking at the Historical Commission's budget that they submitted, Mr. Malloy's recommendation, and then have to decide what direction they will go in. Ms. Nourse felt that Mr. Malloy was looking too narrowly at their budget and not taking in to consideration what they actually do. Mr. Tepper said that they should finish their presentation at Town Meeting with what they are doing. One of the Historical Commission member's thanked the AFC for their hard work, since she is a taxpayer in Town, but she felt that a couple of the members on FinCom didn't think that the Historical Commission was providing a service to the community. Mr. Behn made note that he would like the minutes to reflect what was actually said since members of the Finance Committee thought their message was misunderstood. Mr. Wells said that the general consensus of the Finance Committee was that the Historical Commission needs to justify their service- not that they aren't providing a service. The Historical Commission needs to be prepared to answer questions on the service they provide and what service the Town is receiving for the money. They need to also justify why they need to have this person in their office as their Administrative Assistant. The Historical Commission can present their case at Town Meeting and should also include what they are mandated to do. Mr. Wells asked Ms. Nourse to get the log to Ms. Blazejewski so she can distribute to the Committee for when FinCom debates. One of the Historical Commission members wanted to mention that it is difficult to compare towns since budgets vary and some Commissions don't do what Westborough does. She mentioned that she used to live in Hopkinton and they didn't have signage requirements so the only task they handled was demolition permits. She felt that the Finance Committee should go with what the Historical Commission is recommending since she felt what we have in Westborough is unique. She pointed out that even if the office is staffed by a volunteer, they would still need a coordinator to come up with a schedule for the volunteers, and also open up the office and deal with signage and demo permits. Mr. Wells reminded them to present their case on Town Meeting floor and include this information.

Article 27 – Spurr House (Citizens Petition): Members of the AFC asked Ms. Nourse about Article 27 and if she had any information to add since this issue relates to a home located in the historical district. Ms. Nourse mentioned that Spurr House has been there since 1832 so members of the Historical Commission went to look at the house. A neighbor approached them and asked about the future plans for the Spurr House property since there was a rumor about tearing it down and turning that site in to a parking lot. Ms. Nourse suggested to the neighbor that they get the other neighbors together and add an article to the warrant. The neighbors went ahead and filed a Citizens Petition, however, one member of the Historical Commission, who said she supports Article 27, would have preferred that it was submitted by the Historical Commission in conjunction with the neighbors. Mr. Behn mentioned that the wording of the article may be able to be modified on Town Meeting floor and suggested that she speak with Town Moderator, John Arnold. Ms. Nourse said that she gave an alternative proposal to Board of Selectmen Chairman, George Barrette, about saving the main house but tearing down the addition for parking. Ms. Nourse mentioned that Article 27 is proposing a Committee be formed to study alternative plans for the Spurr House and that the Historical Commission could help with that. Mr. Rauch asked about the part of the article that specifically refers to heating the house. He pointed out that the building has been winterized and the American Legion is no longer there so he wondered why it needed to be heated. Mr. Rauch also mentioned that there may need to be further studies done to make sure the house is structurally sound. Ms. Nourse said that she brought a consultant in for his opinion on the condition of the house and he thought the house was in good condition. Ms. Nourse noted that the Spurr House was given to the Town by the Forbes family. Mr. Rauch asked if there were any legal restrictions in the deed and the Historical Commission didn't think there was. Mr. Rauch suggested checking Town Meeting notes to see if there were any restrictions.

Snow & Ice Deficit Spending Request: Mr. Wells informed the Committee that the DPW is requesting an additional deficit spend in the amount of \$25,000 in wages and \$100,000 in expenses. Right now they are operating at a negative balance. Mr. Rauch noted that the DPW has spent \$975,000 on snow removal so far this year. Mr. Rauch made a motion to authorize the DPW to deficit spend in the amount of \$100,000 in expenses and \$25,000 for salaries and wages for snow and ice removal. Voted: 9-0-0.

ATM Preparation and Related Items

Mr. Tepper asked if Assistant Town Manager, Kristi Williams, was adding the quantity of radios to Article 12F for the Fire Department and Mr. Wells said she was going to include that information.

Mr. Behn referred to Article 4 and the need for an amount in the warrant. Mr. Wells said that he spoke to Town Accountant, Leah Talbot, and they are proposing a direct transfer from free cash to snow and ice removal at the end of the year under Article 4 for the \$435,000 that they are over budget. Mr. Wells would also like to propose having the \$250,000 for the AFC Reserve Fund transferred from free cash. Since taxes are going up around 3% per household, he did not want to add to that increase. Mr. Behn said that when he spoke with Ms. Talbot she mentioned that we may have to spend down some of the money in the AFC's Reserve Fund for snow and ice removal. Mr. Wells said that he will pull together numbers for discussion at a future meeting regarding a transfer from free cash for the AFC Reserve Fund.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Wells informed the Committee about the extra meetings that were added on Wednesday, 2/25, and Wednesday, 3/4. He needs to confirm with Library Director, Maureen Ambrosino, on whether the AFC can meet at the Library on 2/25 since Room 23 at the Forbes building is in use.

Mr. Allen gave a brief report on the Economic Development Committee. He noted that the Worcester Business Bureau recognized Westborough's Town Planner, Jim Robbins, for his outstanding service to the community.

Comments and Concerns – Committee Members

Mr. Behn mentioned that he is working with Leah Talbot on the recap sheet and their numbers reconcile. He pointed out the approximate 3% increase in taxes. Mr. Behn asked if there will be a discussion on Monday

evening, 2/23, with the School Department and School Committee on the use of their revolving funds. Mr. Rauch suggested getting a policy statement from the schools on what their intent is for using the money in those funds. It was noted that turning back some of the excess in the revolving funds and applying toward the school budget would reduce what the schools need and help mitigate the increase in taxes for next year. Gary asked Ed to contact School Superintendent, Amber Bock, about being ready to discuss the use of their revolving funds on 2/23.

Public Reminders for Viewers

None

Adjournment

Mr. Allen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:34 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 9-0-0 in favor, with 9 being present.

Document List

Background Information for AFC Meeting – Historical Commission – Hazel Nourse
Map of Downtown Area – Article 27 – Spurr House – Parkman St. – Hazel Nourse

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Thomas
AFC Administrative Assistant