

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

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

Approval of Past Minutes

Meeting No. 20, February 19, 2015

Mr. Allen requested a correction to the minutes. Mr. Tepper made a motion to approve the amended minutes from 2-19-15. Voted: 7-0-0.

Meeting No. 21, February 23, 2015

Mr. Tepper made a motion to approve the minutes from 2-23-15. Voted: 7-0-0.

Meeting No. 22, February 25, 2015

Mr. Behn made a motion to approve the minutes from 2-25-15. Voted: 5-0-2 (abstention: Kaiser, Tepper).

Meeting No. 23, February 26, 2015

Mr. Behn made a motion to approve the minutes from 2-26-15. Voted: 5-0-2 (abstention: Howard, Tepper).

Meeting No. 24, March 2, 2015

Mr. Behn requested a correction to the minutes. Mr. Behn made a motion to approve the amended minutes from 3-2-15. Voted: 6-0-1 (abstention: Tepper).

Meeting No. 25, March 4, 2015

Mr. Behn and Mr. Allen requested corrections to the minutes. Mr. Behn made a motion to approve the amended minutes from 3-4-15. Voted: 7-0-0.

Meeting No. 26, March 5, 2015

Mr. Rauch made a motion to approve the minutes from 3-5-15. Voted: 7-0-0.

Meeting No. 27, March 14, 2015 (ATM)

Mr. Behn made a motion to approve the minutes from 3-14-15. Voted: 7-0-0.

Snow & Ice Deficit Spending Approval

Mr. Rauch made a motion to authorize the DPW to deficit spend in the amount of \$10,000 for salaries and wages for snow and ice removal. Voted: 7-0-0. Mr. Wells noted, that of the \$435,000 deficit spend approved to date that will be transferred from Free Cash per Town Meeting; they have currently spent \$431,098. Mr. Behn mentioned that the total spent, including what was in the budget, for snow and ice removal came in close to a million dollars.

Town Meeting & Budget Review

John Arnold – Town Moderator: Mr. Arnold met with the AFC to get their feedback regarding the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) and how they felt it went. He also wanted to thank AFC members for their hard work in preparing for the ATM. Mr. Arnold pointed out how helpful the Report & Recommendations book is to voters, along with the Town Meeting handbook. Most AFC members, as well as Mr. Arnold, were surprised the meeting was completed in one day. Committee members felt that Mr. Arnold did a great job keeping the meeting moving and running smoothly. Ms. Blumberg mentioned the blind spots in the auditorium and suggested letting the audience know what sections Mr. Arnold might have difficulty seeing raised hands. Mr. Arnold let the Committee know that if there's ever a time the AFC wants to speak or discuss a vote, please let him know before the meeting, or grab the microphone on the table. He said he realizes the Committee's charge is to provide their

recommendations to voters. Ms. Howard felt that split votes should be commented on. Mr. Behn added that votes by the AFC that differ from the Board of Selectmen (BOS) should be commented on as well, since they may be about controversial subjects. Mr. Arnold said that he can remind the audience that they can request to hear more on split votes. It was noted that the pre-positioned microphones and Mr. Arnold queuing up who was next to speak, helped with the debate and flow of the meeting. Mr. Arnold said he didn't want to move the vote too quickly. Mr. Behn liked that Mr. Arnold ended debate when he was supposed to, and Ms. Kaiser mentioned that she liked that presentations were shortened. Mr. Arnold said that he tried to have presentations kept to a 10-15 minute time frame. If there was a line of questioning, the group could provide a longer presentation if needed, but he wanted to keep it to the basics at the beginning. Ms. Howard pointed out that, by providing a better flow at the meeting, she felt it helped to keep people there so they didn't leave early. Mr. Arnold mentioned that he had slides up advertising those Committees that he appoints members to that currently have vacancies. Mr. Arnold asked how the AFC's process went in preparing for Annual Town Meeting. Members agreed that they felt a bit rushed at the end of the preparation process – and ran out of time - due to the snow and re-scheduled meetings.

Mr. Arnold provided an update on the Spurr House Committee. He has 12 people that have expressed interest in the 5-person committee. Mr. Arnold's goal is to appoint people as quickly as possible so they can get to work and report back at the Special Town Meeting in October. He thanked everyone who volunteered. Mr. Rauch wanted Mr. Arnold to make sure the Spurr House Committee understands what their duty is, and Mr. Arnold said he would make sure they understand the issues regarding the limited parking around municipal buildings in the downtown area.

Mr. Wells brought up Mr. Behn's comments on Section 6-2 in the Charter regarding the "Submission of Budget and Budget Message". Mr. Behn mentioned that the budget must be submitted 90 days before the start of Town Meeting, which he noted is technically Election Day, so that would be 90 days prior to town elections. Mr. Arnold suggested re-writing Section 6-2 so it is clearer, and agreed that the start of Town Meeting is Election Day. There was a discussion over how the budget has been submitted over the past few years. The procedure has been that the budget is presented about 10 days before year end, and then Town Manager, Jim Malloy, submits his recommendations at the first Board of Selectmen meeting in January. Mr. Wells suggested striking the whole 90 day rule and picking 10 days before the end of the year. Mr. Arnold said that an actual date could be chosen as well. Mr. Behn was concerned that if Town Meeting was pushed back to May then they would have to go with "90 days prior to town elections" and strike the "10 days before year end". Mr. Arnold pointed out that the requirement of 90 days prior to town elections would put the budget submission at the beginning of December with a March Town Meeting, which is always a scramble for the departments – especially the schools. He felt these were all good questions and should be brought up to AFC Charter Review liaison, Lisa Blazewski. Mr. Behn mentioned the schools and getting their complete financial plan since the only data they typically receive from Mr. Malloy in the budget book is the bottom line for the schools, without any detail. Mr. Arnold read Section 6-4 about "The Budget" and felt it could be interpreted in another way. He suggested re-working the sentences to be whatever the voters want to see – whether it is detail or not – but Mr. Arnold wasn't sure if residents could tell the School Department what they need. Mr. Arnold identified the different ways in which the first couple of sentences in Section 6-4 could be interpreted and mentioned clarifying and tightening up the language. In Section 6-5 regarding "Action on the Budget", Mr. Behn spoke about his interpretation of "subsequent" and thought it meant some subsequent meeting. Mr. Behn also pointed out that this section of the Charter doesn't state when the budget will be available to the public. He felt the budget should be made available to everyone and posted on the Town website. The Committee wanted to postpone further discussion on the Charter until Ms. Blazewski was present.

Other items relative to Budget Process or Town Meeting Prep

Hank Rauch – Budget for Westborough State Hospital: Mr. Rauch brought up his concerns regarding the expenses related to the maintenance of the Westborough State Hospital property. He pointed out that we are now

heading in to FY'16 with a \$50,000 budget, and he felt we are likely to exceed that amount. He also wondered if the AFC could request/require that expenses related to this property be included in the budget for the following

fiscal year. Mr. Rauch referred to an article where it was mentioned that our Police, Fire, and DPW are caring for this property. He said the article also spoke about vandalism and trespassing on the property so police are having to patrol. Mr. Rauch said he is assuming that if costs for maintaining this property exceed the \$50,000 in the budget, then a transfer from the AFC Reserve Fund can be requested, however, he wasn't sure if the AFC could insure that costs were budgeted for going forward. Mr. Tepper thought that the different departments, like Police and Fire, are keeping track of their expenses and have funds they can use. Mr. Rauch said that he received a budget from DPW Business Administrator, Maria-Elaina Riggieri, where costs are being accrued. He felt that the various departments should be keeping track of costs so we have an idea of what to budget. Mr. Wells pointed out that the salary for the Administrative Assistant for the State Hospital Re-Use Committee will be charged against the \$50,000 allotted for in the budget, so charges will be made. Mr. Rauch was concerned that \$50,000 wasn't going to be enough. Mr. Tepper felt concerns were premature since we don't know what costs are being incurred. Mr. Behn mentioned the Special Town Meeting in October. He thought that we could get an accounting of costs and then take action at that point if necessary. Mr. Well's proposed drafting an email to Town Manager, Jim Malloy, expressing the AFC's concerns over expenditures being made by the DPW – and possibly Police, Fire, and other departments – relative to the State Hospital property.

Mr. Wells asked if there were any other comments or concerns from the Committee regarding Town Meeting preparation. Mr. Wells mentioned that one of his goals was to streamline the process as much as possible. Some examples were grouping liaison assignments together by point of contact, and creating the calendar with departments listed as to when they were scheduled to come in. Mr. Tepper agreed that Mr. Wells' improvements were helpful but he would like to see meeting time better managed. He said he would rather have longer meetings fewer nights than many shorter meetings multiple nights. Mr. Tepper also felt that it was difficult scheduling departments so he thought the schedule should be out earlier. Mr. Wells agreed and said he is already working on next year's schedule. Mr. Behn echoed Mr. Tepper's thoughts and pointed out the limited window to prepare for Town Meeting. He felt departments should make a better effort to meet with the AFC. Mr. Behn brought up Mr. Rauch's point about limiting time. He wanted to be more cognizant of time by hearing highlights of a department's budget for 10 minutes, and then have a 10 minute question and answer session following the presentation. Mr. Behn also suggested having a more formal discussion. When an issue is presented, he wanted to see a more organized approach to asking questions by starting at one end of the table and going around - rather than Committee members jumping in. Mr. Wells said that he can start letting departments know how much time they have to make their presentations in advance, however, we may have to extend that time slightly due to larger budgets like Fire and Schools. On the other hand, Mr. Wells didn't want to spend a lot of time on smaller budgets. Ms. Howard agreed with Mr. Tepper's proposal and felt that department heads should be bringing any supporting documentation they could be questioned on when they meet with the AFC. Mr. Tepper reiterated his point about time management and felt that discussion should be monitored so meeting time is more efficient. Mr. Behn mentioned that other towns handle their preparation for Town Meeting differently. He gave the example of Shrewsbury where they take two Saturdays and run all the departments through. He felt it may be worth looking at how other towns prepare since there may be procedures that are more beneficial. Mr. Wells pointed out that Town Manager, Jim Malloy, should be invited in first, with larger departments scheduled immediately after that, and smaller departments coming in later in the preparation process. Mr. Tepper went back to the previous discussion about the Charter and Section 6-5 where Mr. Arnold mentioned a joint meeting between the Board of Selectmen, Advisory Finance Committee, and the Capital Expenditures Planning Committee. Since that isn't what happens currently, Mr. Arnold wasn't sure if the Charter Review Committee will be re-writing that section to say what is done now, or if they'll be keeping what is written and changing the way things done. Mr. Arnold remembered when a joint meeting was held - as is written in the Charter - but doesn't think that has been done in the last 5 years. Mr. Rauch asked if it was a decision making meeting or only informational. Mr. Arnold said that

the Capital Expenditures Planning Committee would present upcoming capital plans, so it was more of an informational meeting.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Tepper reported on some key points regarding the Gibbons School renovation project. Due to the positive vote at Town Meeting, the next step is to begin the design development phase. Mr. Tepper said that a General Contractor should be hired and in place by July 1st, then work will begin on requests for proposals (RFP's) for the subcontractors. Mr. Tepper noted that construction should start in February of 2016 and be completed by August of 2017. He mentioned that the contracts for the architect and Owner's Project Manager (OPM) need to be extended. Mr. Tepper said the Gibbons School Building Committee will continue to meet every couple of weeks.

Comments and Concerns – Committee Members

None

Public Reminders for Viewers

None

Adjournment

Mr. Behn a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 7-0-0 in favor, with 7 being present.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Thomas
AFC Administrative Assistant