

Members Present: Gary Wells, Chair, Jim Tepper, Hank Rauch, Beth Blumberg, Tara Howard, Ed Behn, Sharon Kaiser, 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. 28, April 6, 2015

Mr. Tepper made a motion to approve the minutes from 4-6-15. Voted: 7-0-2 (abstention: Allen, Blazejewski).

AFC Reserve Fund Transfer

Mr. Wells informed the Committee that a transfer of \$750.00 was needed to the AFC's wages account to cover administrative duties through the end of this fiscal year. Mr. Behn made a motion to transfer \$750.00 from the AFC Reserve Fund to the AFC Wages - Clerical Acct #11312-5103. Mr. Tepper asked why we aren't zeroing out what's left in our budget for other line items before requesting a transfer. Mr. Wells pointed out that there's a little more than \$200 left in the AFC's total budget and there are some reimbursable expenses that need to be taken care of before the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Behn explained that a transfer from expenses to salary would require both a vote by the Selectmen and the Finance Committee whereas a transfer from the AFC's reserve fund requires only a vote by the AFC. Mr. Behn also pointed out that any excess funds remaining would be transferred back to Free Cash. Voted: 9-0-0.

Snow & Ice Deficit Spending Review

Mr. Wells provided a bulletin from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue regarding the amortization of FY2015 snow and ice removal deficit and special accounting treatment for intended FEMA reimbursement, along with a graph he put together depicting 7 year actuals versus averages for snow and ice removal. Mr. Wells informed the Committee that he attended a MEMA/FEMA meeting today and explained how the disaster declaration would work for the FEMA reimbursement. He said that basically the Town could choose any 48 hour window relative to the storm for direct storm related expenses and reviewed what would qualify for reimbursement, such as overtime, and what wouldn't qualify - such as normal working hours. Mr. Wells also mentioned that roof clearing could be claimed even if it occurred 2-3 weeks later since it could take that long to get to it. He said that DPW Business Administrator, Maria-Elaina Riggieri, and Captain Bob Rand of the Fire Department are the point people who will compile the figures and complete the application for FEMA assistance. Mr. Wells said that whatever the amount is, the Town will only receive back 75%. For example, if the amount that is submitted is \$150,000, then the Town could receive approximately \$112,500 in direct reimbursement. Mr. Wells also referred to the amortization of deficit spending related to snow and ice removal. Normally the deficit spend amount for snow and ice removal needs to be paid within that fiscal year, or it is rolled in to the following year's recap sheet. However, due to the abnormal winter and amount of snow this area received, towns will be allowed to apply the anticipated FEMA reimbursement to a special deficit account. In our case, that would reduce the amount needed from Free Cash that was voted at Town Meeting in the amount of \$431,000 by the expected FEMA reimbursement to cover snow and ice removal for this year. Mr. Wells said that the only item completed today was to fill out the official form that the Town of Westborough would be filing a claim. Mr. Wells felt that the process could take a while and we may not see the actual reimbursement for years. Mr. Tepper asked if there was any action the AFC needed to take at this time. Mr. Wells said there may be budget transfers and that Town Accountant, Leah Talbot, will keep him informed as to what needs to be done. Mr. Wells also explained that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) can take the remaining amount owed for the snow and ice deficit after the anticipated FEMA reimbursement and amortize it over three years. Ms. Blazejewski asked how that would work since residents already voted at Town Meeting to move \$435,000 from Free Cash and that amount would change if it was amortized. It was noted that the amount amortized could cause taxes to increase over three years rather than

paying the deficit off now. Ms. Blazejewski felt that could be an issue. Mr. Wells referred to the graph provided to Committee members. He noted that even with the significant jump from this past year, we are still tracking

along a 3.5% growth line. Mr. Wells pointed out that an average snow year would result in about \$657,000 in expenses for snow removal, which would come out to about \$103,000 in deficit spending.

Charter Review – Lisa Blazejewski: Ms. Blazejewski reported that the Charter Review Committee is busy working on their presentation to the Board of Selectmen (BOS). She offered to have Charter Review Chairman, Bob Deysher, come in after the BOS presentation and provide an update to the AFC. Ms. Blazejewski asked for the AFC's help in identifying areas where current practice doesn't match what's written in the Charter, and pointed to Section 6. She felt that some of the language in the Charter needed to be simplified – with more specific language reserved for the bylaws – and that current practice needed to be clarified. She asked for any comments or suggestions that she could bring back to the Charter Review Committee for consideration. There was continued discussion over Section 6 of the Charter. It was noted that there is confusion over dates as to when the budget should be done, when the warrant should be posted, and when meetings should be scheduled. Ms. Blazejewski mentioned that she only provided her revision of Section 6-5. Mr. Rauch felt that Section 6-2 needed to also be revised. Mr. Behn referred to his comments from the April AFC meeting where this was discussed and referenced the ten day rule. He felt that having the budget done 10 days before the end of the calendar year works for the March meeting, but that we would need to change that to the 90 day rule if Town Meeting was moved to May. Mr. Behn mentioned that the earliest we could have Town elections is March 3rd, which is also the start of Town Meeting. If we went back to May elections and a May Annual Town Meeting then we would have to have the budget finalized at the beginning of February. Mr. Tepper suggested changing the language to having the budget done a certain number of days before Annual Town Meeting since we need a 90 day window whether the ATM is in March or May. Mr. Behn felt the real issue was identifying when Town Meeting starts. Ms. Blazejewski said that she'd ask Town Counsel for their interpretation of when Town Meeting starts based on the current language in the Charter.

Mr. Behn brought up his request at a prior Charter Review meeting where he asked that if the Town budget needs to be done by a certain date then the school budget should have to be finalized by then and in a similar detailed fashion. There was some discussion as to whether the school budget is done by 12/21 and it was determined that it was, however the current wording says that the school budget can be presented as deemed per Town Meeting. It was noted that this wording is ambiguous and can be interpreted many ways. Mr. Behn felt that the Town and schools budgets should be presented on the Town website so everyone can review. Mr. Rauch didn't feel that the Town Charter had the authority to require what's presented as a school budget and the level of detail. Ms. Blazejewski will check with Town Counsel as to what is required and whether "Town" also includes the schools.

Mr. Tepper referred to the joint meeting mentioned in Section 6 and felt there should be a true joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen where there is open discussion about the budget. Mr. Allen agreed since currently there is only a Selectmen open meeting and not a joint meeting with the AFC. Mr. Tepper felt that a joint meeting should take place about 14 days before the ATM between the BOS and AFC. Ms. Blazejewski added that the joint meeting should be open for the public to attend to discuss the budget. Mr. Tepper referred to a presentation he caught of Northborough's budget process that he liked because everyone met in one room to discuss the budget. Mr. Allen said that it might be easy to get rid of the joint meeting requirement because we aren't currently doing it, but there's likely a reason why it is in the Charter. Mr. Allen also referred to the budget being posted on the Town website a week before Town Meeting for residents to review. Mr. Behn felt that some of the language in the Charter was due to not having electronic ways of getting information out to voters. There was continued discussion over when the budget is presented, along with publishing requirements and a time line. Mr. Rauch felt that if what we are trying to accomplish is to make the Town Manager's recommended budget available to the public in a timely manner then that's what Section 6 should state. Mr. Wells suggested having the Charter state a time frame for when the Town Manager needs to make his budget submission to the BOS and presentation, and then have a certain requirement as to when the budget is posted publicly. Mr. Behn agreed and said there needs to

be transparency and proper review. Mr. Allen said he would have trouble supporting the deletion of Section 6-5 regarding "Action on the Budget" unless a requirement was added that a report would be made available. Ms. Blazejewski wasn't sure what requests could be made but she will find out and keep the AFC posted.

FY2016 Meeting Schedule

Mr. Wells referred to his handout regarding the suggestions Committee members provided last month for improving the efficiency of AFC meetings going forward. Some of the comments included going around the table so each AFC member could ask questions if they had any, making sure departments were prepared when meeting with the AFC, and doing a better job with time management. Mr. Wells said he will inform departments in advance as to how much time they have for their presentation and formalize the structure more. Mr. Tepper felt that departments should be asked about any big changes and that the AFC shouldn't get involved with the smaller items. Mr. Behn liked Mr. Tepper's request for key points and also felt that the AFC should receive a copy of the Annual Town Report in advance so they aren't looking at it for the first time at Town Meeting. He pointed out that by receiving this information earlier – especially for the larger departments – it would allow the AFC to become more knowledgeable and help the liaisons identify any big changes. Mr. Wells said he would re-work his handout to include suggestions provided at tonight's meeting.

Mr. Wells also wanted to review the AFC's meeting schedule for FY2016. He mentioned that the AFC will meet 7/14/15 for year-end transfers. If the AFC meets in August, it would be on 8/3 since that's the first Monday of the month and the regular meeting time. For September, Mr. Wells is proposing having the first AFC meeting of the month on Thursday, 9/17/15, as the kick off to Town Meeting preparation. The AFC would then start meeting every Monday and Thursday evening after that up until the October Town Meeting if necessary. Mr. Rauch pointed out that the State Hospital recommendation for the re-use of that land may come up in October. Ms. Blazejewski also added that the Charter Review Committee may be presenting their revisions, which could be substantial. There was concern over the possible length of the Town Meeting warrant in October. Mr. Wells said that the meeting schedule was provided as a rough draft for discussion and can be amended if needed. Mr. Behn was concerned with the Charter Review and felt that the AFC may want to start Town Meeting preparations earlier if there are substantial Charter items. Mr. Wells mentioned starting Monday, 9/14, if that is the case. Ms. Blazejewski thought that the Charter Review Committee would be making their presentation to the Board of Selectmen in June so she could have Mr. Deysher meet with the AFC in July, but she'll keep us posted. Mr. Wells reviewed the rest of the AFC's meeting schedule up through next March's Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Wells said he hopes to post the AFC's FY2016 meeting schedule for the entire year by July 1st. Ms. Blumberg suggested posting the extended Open Forums available to the public in advance. Mr. Tepper noted the 18 meetings scheduled between January and March of 2016 and would entertain a slightly longer meeting with fewer nights. There was a discussion over Mr. Tepper's proposal. Mr. Wells asked Committee members to give Mr. Tepper's suggestion some thought for further discussion at next month's meeting.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Allen reported on the Municipal Building Committee. Punch List items at the new Fire Station are being completed. There will be public tours of the new station at their Open House on Memorial Day. Mr. Allen also noted that the adjacent parking lot is scheduled to be done by the end of May but the Memorial Park may not be completed until later in the summer. The Committee is looking at holding a dedication on 9/11 when everything is finished. Regarding the Town Hall, the Committee decided to have a new roof installed now while the Town Hall is still a construction site. They will use the roofer on site since he was the low bidder and already familiar with the job. The new roof will cost approximately \$291,000.00. Mr. Allen said that new furniture will be delivered around the beginning of September with a move in date targeted for the Labor Day time frame. He felt the Town Hall exterior should look nice for the June 26th Block Party. Mr. Allen pointed out that, even with the roof replacement, the project is still under budget about \$700,000.00 from what was approved. Mr. Allen also mentioned renovation of the Forbes Building. Mr. Allen reported that Town Manager, Jim Malloy, requested that the architect update the design plans since he'd like to bring this subject forward at the October Town Meeting.

Mr. Tepper reported on the Gibbons School Building Committee. They had a meeting this afternoon and will continue to meet every two weeks for the next couple of months. Requests for quotes (RFQ's) were sent out for

the Contractor at Risk. The Committee will review submissions received and get recommendations. Mr. Tepper said that of the submissions they receive back, only four will be asked for their bids. Mr. Tepper felt a selection would be made by the end of June so the project could start in July. He mentioned that most of the work will be done over the summers, with a completion date by August 2017.

Comments and Concerns – Committee Members

None

Public Reminders for Viewers

Mr. Tepper wanted to thank those businesses that supported the Westborough Rotary Club's Spring Festival this past weekend.

Adjournment

Mr. Behn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:13 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 9-0-0 in favor, with 9 being present.

Document List

Bulletin regarding Amortization of FY2015 Snow & Ice Removal Deficit Spending – MA Dept. of Revenue
DPW – Snow & Ice Removal – Gary Wells
Westborough AFC Meeting Improvement Notes from 4-6-15 – Gary Wells

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Thomas
AFC Administrative Assistant