

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

At 7:01 p.m. Mr. Wells called the meeting to order in the third floor breakroom of the Forbes Municipal Building.

Approval of Past Minutes

Meeting No. 3, September 17, 2015

Mr. Behn made a motion to approve the amended minutes from 9-17-15. Voted: 8-0-0.

Fall Special Town Meeting – Warrant Articles, Q&A

Article 9 – HR/Payroll Software Upgrade – Kristi Williams, Mark Stockman, & the School Department:

Mr. Behn asked Assistant Town Manager, Kristi Williams, and MIS/GIS Director, Mark Stockman, to review the numbers in order to figure out the savings expected over 5 years if the Town processed their own payroll. Ms. Williams explained that currently the Town pays \$27,200 annually to Harpers Payroll Services. She pointed out that the Town's cost for the new software is \$38,700. Mr. Behn asked if that cost was subject to change. Ms. Williams replied that the total cost of the software is \$79,100, but Mr. Stockman worked with the software company to see what kind of technology support we would need. With technical support, Ms. Williams noted that the software would be \$98,700, but the School Department is committing \$60,000 toward that cost. She mentioned that the annual operating cost is approximately \$10,000, so that would be a savings of about \$16,980/year. Mr. Tepper pointed out that they're indicating the cost would be paid back within 5 years; however \$16,980/year x 5 years is \$84,900, so really it ends up being more like a 6 year payback. Ms. Williams said that they are requesting \$38,700 out of Free Cash and then the School Department would commit \$60,000 out of their current FY16 budget. Mr. Behn asked what Town department processes the payroll with Harpers and Ms. Williams said it goes through the Treasurer's office. Mr. Doret noted that the Town's commitment would be \$10,000/year. Currently the Town pays \$27,200 for the whole payroll since the Treasurer processes the payroll for both the Town and the schools. Mr. Behn felt that the payroll should be fairly consistent. School Superintendent, Amber Bock, said that is not the case for the schools. She noted that teachers hit lanes at different times and that there is a diversified set of different pay assignments such as for long term subs and paraprofessionals. Ms. Bock mentioned that payroll for the schools goes through Irene Oliver's office as the Director of Finance & Administration first so they can make any changes and updates for Human Resources, and then it is sent to the Treasurer's office for processing. The schools then need to re-enter information in to the MUNIS software so they can track absences and vacation time. Mr. Doret pointed out that is the reason why the schools are willing to contribute \$60,000 toward the cost since right now they are entering the same information twice. Ms. Williams mentioned that they are familiar with what they want in a payroll software package and have been working with a few companies. She added that they would like to choose a company before Town Meeting and are looking to go live by January 1st. Ms. Williams noted that they are trying to time installation of the new software for when it is best for the schools and for the Treasurer's office. If January 1st doesn't work, Ms. Williams said they will aim for July 1st. Mr. Behn was concerned with a network outage for the payroll system and asked how we would deal with that situation if it occurred. Mr. Stockman said that they already do that with Harpers, since payroll data is sent on a daily basis. He added that whatever vendor we choose, we'd want the capability that if we are unable to process payroll, they could. Mr. Behn looked at the Payroll offering from Tyler Tech, the software vendor for our MUNIS software, and he didn't think they had an outsource payroll service component. Mr. Stockman thought that MUNIS could process payroll. Ms. Williams pointed out that before the Town used Harpers, they used MUNIS so we would be going back. There was discussion about having a recovery sight so there is a backup in the event the system crashed. Ms. Williams said that the Request for Proposal (RFP) includes a Q&A session and vendor demonstration. She also noted that they want to stick with a vendor that has experience dealing with

municipalities. Mr. Tepper pointed out that a number of towns use MUNIS for their payroll so that vendor has already been vetted. Ms. Williams said they are hoping to not have to pay a “per member” fee so retirees can be included. Mr. Tepper suggested highlighting the savings at Town Meeting. Ms. Bock added that the new software would improve work efficiencies and streamline HR functions. Ms. Williams also pointed out that there would be better communication with employees, such as for ethics testing, and notifying about open enrollment, since the Town doesn’t have an employee intranet. Ms. Howard mentioned security and Mr. Stockman said that the Town would want all of those assurances from whatever vendor they go with. Ms. Blumberg noted that the new software would provide better tracking of certifications and asked if it also tracks CORI checks. Ms. Bock said she wasn’t sure and added that they have a whole series of initiatives to become better organized and that this is just the first step.

Article 15–Pre-K to 3 School Building Committee Town Authorization–Amber Bock & School Committee:

Mr. Rauch asked if the schools are looking to build a new school and if the schools plan on sharing that with the Town. Nicole Sullivan with the School Committee mentioned that they are going to give a “State of the Schools” presentation similar to what Town Manager, Jim Malloy, does with the “State of the Town” report at Town Meeting. The School Committee will specifically let residents know what’s coming up for the schools at Town Meeting so they are aware. Mr. Doret added that they will also provide what they think the solution is. He noted that this would be the beginning of preparing for the process to submit their application to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for approval. School Committee member, Jody Hensley, mentioned that the Joint Committee on Student Enrollment met June 30th and heard the results of the enrollment study. However, the schools have found that there are more students after going ‘door to door’ than the planners factored in. Ms. Hensley noted that they are anticipating the biggest population pressure in 2017 – especially at the K-3 level – and they could have about 400 more kids that they will need to accommodate. Mr. Doret pointed out that we do things well here in this town so that creates numbers that are different than in other parts of the county and state. He also mentioned that the schools are the biggest cost in this community on an annual basis. They are looking at what tools they can use so the numbers don’t expand beyond what is affordable. Mr. Rauch suggested that the School Committee focus on the purpose of this article and what needs to be done, rather than discussing the enrollment study. Ms. Bock pointed out Ms. Sullivan’s suggestion where they will educate residents now and then go back in the spring with specifics. Mr. Rauch proposed having a public meeting so residents can attend that meeting to gain more information similar to what the Town did with the State Hospital land. Ms. Bock noted that the name of the Committee is legally required per the MSBA, and Ms. Hensley added that the Committee needs to be put in place in order to follow the procedure with the MSBA so we can get funding. Ms. Bock pointed out that they will inform residents that the other schools can absorb the bubble, other than at the K-3 level. Mr. Doret mentioned that we will still need to have the MSBA involved in building a new school even if they aren’t providing funding, though we wouldn’t have to follow their requirements. Mr. Doret noted that, by not building a new school, they will keep the school system at six schools so they will have the same overhead and a minimal increase to staffing. Ms. Hensley mentioned her handout about the school enrollment study and said that this joint committee will continue to meet. Ms. Sullivan added that the joint committee allows collaboration with other Town departments. Ms. Hensley hoped that the AFC endorsed the joint committee and would stay involved. Mr. Wells said that he would continue attending the joint committee meetings as a representative from the AFC. Ms. Hensley pointed out that their first year estimation was an increase of 60 students and they ended up with 91 and they’d like to know why the numbers aren’t following the trend. Mr. Rauch made a motion that the Advisory Finance Committee appoints Chairman, Gary Wells, to continue his involvement with the Joint Enrollment Committee. Voted 7-0-1 (abstention: Wells).

Fall Special Town Meeting – Warrant Articles, Committee Discussion

Mr. Wells noted that he emailed out the first draft of the Report & Recommendation book to Committee members and mentioned that there will be changes. He pointed out that the Library Trustees will be meeting with the AFC on Monday night, 9/28. They are the only department scheduled that night so Mr. Wells thought that the Committee could begin an intensive discussion about articles that evening. Mr. Wells noted that the Committee can run through each article and indicate whether there are no questions or whether additional information is

needed, and then vote the articles. Mr. Wells mentioned that the State Hospital Re-Use Committee is coming in on 10/1, and Town Planner, Jim Robbins, will stay and discuss the zoning articles. Mr. Tepper requested a map or visual aid for the downtown area and also wanted Mr. Robbins to be prepared to discuss what the changes are and the implications.

Ms. Blumberg pointed out that the Spurr House Committee was meeting with the Board of Selectmen after they left the last AFC meeting and asked if we knew the outcome. Unofficially, Mr. Wells noted that the BOS were receptive to their suggestion and that Article 2 for the demolition of the Spurr House was put in the warrant as a place holder. If Article 1 is approved, then he thought they would pass over Article 2. Mr. Rauch asked if they should expect a motion from the floor and whether they'll vote the motion rather than the article. Mr. Behn mentioned that the AFC's recommendation could be to accept the report rather than voting yes or no. Mr. Wells pointed out that the Library is coming in on Monday, 9/28, at 8 pm. He suggested using the time before meeting with the Library to review articles, since he'd like to start voting by October 5th. Mr. Behn requested having Town Manager, Jim Malloy, back in to talk about the new roof for the Country Club. Mr. Wells said he would email Mr. Malloy to see if he can come to the 9/28 meeting before the Library. Mr. Wells said that it looks like our tax rate will be \$17.77/per thousand, and that is down by about 2.7% to 3.0%. He said this was mostly due to an increase in the total valuation of the Town and average house valuation (\$465K). Mr. Wells noted that these are still just estimates. Mr. Behn pointed out that it looks like we're getting in more revenue from local receipts as well. Mr. Wells mentioned that Article 11 for Election Salaries and Wages in the amount of \$3,132 has been reduced to \$1,200. He said there was a mistake between fiscal year and calendar year as to what was needed when calculating the extra expense. Mr. Wells noted that the R&R book is ready to go - we just need votes and the AFC's recommendations.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Gibbons School Building Committee - Mr. Tepper, as liaison, wanted to provide clarification on the name of the Gibbons Middle School Building Committee. He noted that the "Gibbons Middle School Building Committee" is the proper name and not "Gibbons Middle School Renovation Committee" even though it is a renovation project.

Comments and Concerns – Committee Members

None

Public Reminders for Viewers

There was a reminder about Hazardous Waste Day this Saturday, 9/26, at the DPW. The Arts In Common event was also mentioned. It will be held this Saturday, 9/26, at Bay State Commons. Viewers were encouraged to check online for the schedule of events and more details.

Adjournment

Mr. Behn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 8-0-0 in favor, with 8 being present.

Document List

Proposal to sustain work of Joint Enrollment Committee – Jody Hensley in consultation with George Barrette
Proposed response to Enrollment Report – School Superintendent Amber Bock

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Thomas
AFC Administrative Assistant