

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

At 7:03 p.m. Mr. Wells called the meeting to order in Room 23 of the Forbes Municipal Building.

Open Forum

There was no one here to address the Committee.

Approval of Past Minutes

Meeting No. 4, September 21, 2015

Mr. Tepper made a motion to approve the amended minutes from 9/21/15. Voted: 8-0-0.

Fall Special Town Meeting – Warrant Articles

Article 6–Westborough State Hospital and Hazardous Materials Survey–State Hospital Re-Use Committee

Town Planner, Jim Robbins, and State Hospital Re-Use Committee Chairman, Brian Bush, met with the Committee to discuss Article 6. They are requesting \$176,000 in order to perform an asbestos study and land survey. They estimate the asbestos study will cost \$150,000, and then the remainder would be used for a subdivision and land survey. Mr. Bush explained that the Re-Use Committee has been meeting for months and the direction they are taking is that some of the parcels of land will be sold off for private use. He noted that the condition of the buildings on the land isn't good and they contain asbestos. Mr. Bush explained that if a company is looking to buy land with existing buildings on it, then they would likely bid a price that would take in to consideration the asbestos and it would be a worst case scenario. Mr. Bush said that if they take away the unknown regarding the asbestos and determine what's there, then they will get more competitive bids on the property. He noted that the survey work would be for the entire town parcel. Mr. Rauch asked if all the buildings on the land contain asbestos. Mr. Bush said that most of the buildings on the land to be developed do contain asbestos. He mentioned that there are some greenhouses on the land that the Town will keep that need to be knocked down. Mr. Behn inquired about the underground tunnel system and whether this survey would perform an evaluation on the tunnels. Mr. Bush said it would and they'd also know about the asbestos. Mr. Behn asked if this survey would be broken down by building and Mr. Bush said the survey will be extensive and would be broken down by building and location. Mr. Behn wondered if any tunnels were located on Town land and Mr. Robbins said he would look in to that inquiry. Mr. Rauch noted that a 21E survey has been done and Mr. Bush confirmed that it has and mentioned that the 21E survey deals with any oil spills located underground. Mr. Tepper asked if there has been a discussion as to the cost of what the asbestos removal might be and Mr. Bush said there have been some estimates provided that came in around \$1.5 million based on visual inspections. Mr. Robbins pointed out that knowing the cost of the asbestos removal will help them when considering bids and allow them to reject bids that come in too low. Mr. Tepper also mentioned that an alternative would be giving a credit to the bidder if they clean up the asbestos themselves. Ms. Blumberg asked about the Allen Building property that is adjacent to the Town land and also the land set aside for development. She asked if the Town looks at purchasing the Allen Building in 5 years if there will be an additional cost for asbestos removal. Mr. Bush said there possibly could be an additional cost, though he wasn't sure since they did work on that building a few years back. Mr. Rauch asked, if after the survey is performed, will we have complete information as to what's on the land. Mr. Robbins said we would and that they understand there is no groundwater or soil contamination and that all of the contamination is located within the building sites. Mr. Bush said they are fairly confident that the cost is accurate. Mr. Wells asked why the town line doesn't include the parking lot. Mr. Bush mentioned that was discussed at the public meetings. He has a handout that they will distribute at Town Meeting and prefer to keep the focus on the article rather than the property lines. Mr. Tepper suggested that they let voters know that the survey is being done on all Town land with the exception of the greenhouse and shed and that would cover all buildings on both the

Town land and what's designated for development. Ms. Blumberg added perhaps they should ask the Town Moderator to do a short report and then discuss the article and what the survey is for. It was noted that the Town Manager said the property lines are not a Town Meeting issue and that the State Hospital Re-Use Committee will come back and give a report at a future Town Meeting. Mr. Bush mentioned attending their public meetings if someone wants more information on the property. Ms. Blumberg said that they should let voters know that the 21E survey has been done and now they need to focus on the buildings.

Article 4 – Downtown Planning Overlay District Amendment & Article 5 – Sign Bylaw Amendment – Zoning – Jim Robbins, Town Planner & Planning Board Chairman, Brian Bush

Mr. Bush read the statement they have prepared from the Planning Board for Town Meeting and provided a handout to Committee members. Mr. Robbins also distributed a handout that will be shown as a Power Point presentation at Town Meeting. Mr. Robbins referred to page 3 of his handout and noted that there are only 10 proposed parcels that will be affected since they have to have frontage on Main Street. He noted that his handout outlines the criteria. He gave the example of Bay State Abrasives and the old train station, and also the property at 25 West Main Street, where the value of those properties has greatly increased. Mr. Robbins pointed out that this has a huge economic impact to the Town, and Mr. Bush added that the Town gets better tax revenue and these properties are aesthetically pleasing. Mr. Robbins mentioned that they are looking long range and envisioning what the downtown area will look like. Mr. Tepper asked Mr. Robbins to review page 30 of his handout regarding housing units in the downtown area having fewer children. Mr. Robbins explained how they came up with those numbers. He said that people with kids don't want to live downtown; however living downtown may be more attractive to young professionals and empty nesters. Mr. Bush pointed out that the downtown areas affected can only use the property for mixed use so it can't contain all apartments. Mr. Robbins gave the Waterman Design property as an example - Tavolino's restaurant is located there, along with UMass Medical, and possibly one residential unit.

Article 5 – Sign Bylaw Amendment – Zoning – Jim Robbins, Town Planner & Planning Board Chairman, Brian Bush

Mr. Robbins referred to Article 5 in the warrant and said that Section 3337 of this article is where there are the most significant changes. He pointed out that these changes only apply to commercial or non-residential properties. Mr. Robbins noted that the Historic Commission, Planning Board, and Design Review Board in collaboration have come up with written guidelines for business owners to follow if they make any changes to their signage in the downtown area. Mr. Robbins said that by having all 3 Boards in agreement, it eliminates business owners from having to meet with each board separately. Mr. Robbins gave an example of a change and pointed out that signs saying "grand opening" will be limited to 30 days and won't be allowed to stay up indefinitely. Ms. Blumberg asked for clarification on signs that are vandalized and need to be replaced. Mr. Robbins said that if a sign is destroyed by a tropical storm, or a fire, or is vandalized, the business can replace that sign with an identical sign. However, if they want to make changes to the sign then that would fall under the new guidelines. Mr. Tepper noted an instance where the Historical Commission wouldn't let a business owner replace a sign using modern materials. Mr. Robbins mentioned that you can replace a sign with the same materials but if you change the material from wood to plastic for example then it needs to go through the Design Review Board. If the sign is replaced with plastic and it was plastic before then it can be done. Mr. Robbins did point out that it is difficult to answer questions on every scenario since he hasn't seen the submitted application, but he did say that if the material is changed, or the way it's lit, or the size, then it needs to go through Design Review. Mr. Behn asked about gas stations and Mr. Robbins said that pump stations are exempt. Mr. Behn gave the example of the 7-11 convenience store at the Rotary and asked if there was a change in ownership and Cumberland Farms came in, would they be able to replace 7-11's lit sign with their lit sign. Mr. Robbins didn't think they could. Mr. Behn asked what gets grandfathered and what does not. Mr. Robbins explained that lettering on a sign is exempt, so if a business changes names and they use the same sign but change the lettering, then that would be acceptable. Mr. Robbins clarified that if a sign is removed or it is changed - other than re-lettering - then it would fall under the new guidelines. Mr. Behn asked about non-profits, charitable, and religious causes and gave the example of the sign at St. Luke's Church for the Bishops Fund. He mentioned that this is a big sign and stays up for months. Mr.

Robbins explained that you could get permission from the Building Commissioner to put a sign up for 30 days, take it down for a day, and then get permission to put it back up for another 30 days. Mr. Robbins pointed out freedom of speech and referred Mr. Behn to case law, and said they can't regulate content. They can only regulate the sign for size, location, and the duration it is up. There was a discussion about banners and Mr. Bush said that banners that are hung for 30 days or less and are of a particular size, or smaller, aren't regulated. It was noted that if a banner is hung for more than 30 days then it becomes a sign and is subject to regulation. Mr. Robbins mentioned that pre-existing signs are not regulated. He also said that you are able to go to the Zoning Board and get a permit for a re-occurring, non-conforming sign. Mr. Tepper asked about signs advertising a special event or activity and the rationale for different rules as to whether it is posted inside or outside of the building. Mr. Robbins explained that signs hung up in a building are treated differently than a sign outside on the ground. Ms. Blumberg asked about sandwich boards and Mr. Robbins said those are allowed if approved by Design Review. Mr. Robbins noted that it is difficult to regulate signs, since it is hard to determine how long a sign has been up on roads less traveled. Mr. Robbins explained that the purpose of this article was to clean up some of the rules and regulations since this has been a controversial topic for years. He noted that they now have support and collaboration from all boards and departments involved in trying to address signage after working on this for a year. Mr. Robbins said he would rather focus on the purpose of this article and not the minutiae. He noted that Articles 4 and 6 have a tremendous financial impact on the Town and that Article 5 regarding the signage has only a small impact. Mr. Behn inquired about public hearings on the two zoning articles and Mr. Robbins said those were held in August and can be viewed online.

Fall Special Town Meeting – Warrant Articles, Committee Discussion

Mr. Wells informed the Committee that he received an email from DPW Business Administrator, Maria-Elaina Riggieri, and she said that the Town received \$128,884.32 from MEMA for roof clearing and snow removal from last winter.

Article 11 – FY16 Additional Appropriations – Mr. Wells asked if there was any more discussion regarding this article. Mr. Behn noted that the warrant closed with the wrong amounts. He said that his motion reflects the correct numbers. Mr. Behn made a motion that we recommend that the Town vote to raise and appropriate \$3,000 for Selectmen/Town Manager Expenses, \$2,500 for Personnel Board Expenses, \$1,200 for Election Salary and Wages, \$99,700 for General Fund Debt Service Expenses, \$7,136 for General Fund Town Building Expenses, \$13,900 for Water Enterprise Fund Debt Service Expenses, and \$55,400 for Sewer Enterprise Fund Debt Service Expenses. Voted 8-0-0.

Article 12 – Library Architectural and Engineering Services – Mr. Tepper said that he'd like to know what has been spent so far and what is remaining before he votes on this article. Mr. Behn offered to put together a brief summary showing the money left in Article 7 from the October 2014 Special Town Meeting, as well as what has been used so far and what has been appropriated. Ms. Blumberg said that it should be made clear to voters that the Library realized a short term fix to the windows wasn't the best solution, since part of the money in this article was for a window replacement. Mr. Driscoll felt there should be something showing that we have \$223,000 coming forward and here is the use of those funds and what is left. Mr. Behn proposed drafting something himself and he'll give it to the Library for verification before distributing. He believes he can address questions that have come up. Mr. Behn also felt that some sort of reconciliation should be added to the R&R book. Mr. Wells wanted to hold off on a vote for this article until Mr. Behn provides his report.

Article 10 – Country Club Building Roof Replacement – Mr. Wells mentioned that he has a relative who is a carpenter and they did a quick quotation for the Country Club roof. In the quote, Mr. Wells noted that they have enough material to remove the old roof and put an entire new roof on the building. He also said that they used the best materials and included all of the miscellaneous supplies that may be needed, as well as adding in the cost of insurance, labor, a mark-up, and contingency. Mr. Wells wanted to make a point that his quote of \$109,664 came in much less than what was in the warrant of \$181,900.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Wells mentioned that the Committee is still waiting to receive more information so there will be no additional voting on articles tonight. He noted that representatives from the Wastewater Treatment Plant will be in on Monday night, October 5th. In addition, Mr. Barrette from the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager, Jim Malloy, will also be meeting with the AFC that evening to discuss Articles 1 & 2 pertaining to the Spurr House, as well as Article 10 for the Country Club roof, and Article 17 about the Strong Chief Statute. Mr. Wells referenced his handout regarding the Message to Town Voters for the R&R book and noted that he is up to "Revision D". Mr. Tepper suggested that the R&R book show the difference in the tax rate from 2015-2016 since it is a decrease over the previous year. Mr. Tepper also mentioned spelling out "Advisory Finance Committee" when it is first used and then in parentheses note that the abbreviation is "AFC" so the message to voters doesn't end up being too long. Mr. Wells encouraged Committee members to send him their comments or suggestions for changes since the Message to Town Voters is from the AFC and not just from him.

Ms. Howard informed the Committee that she attended the most recent School Committee meeting. She wanted to clarify the current enrollment of new students. Ms. Howard said that Assistant School Superintendent, Daniel Mayer, said that 56 students were added this year. She said they expected 60 new students, then they thought there were going to have 91 new students, but some families that intended on coming to Westborough didn't end up here. Ms. Howard noted that there were 3,624 students in 2014 versus 3,680 in 2015.

Comments and Concerns – Committee Members

None

Public Reminders for Viewers

None

Adjournment

Mr. Behn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 8-0-0 in favor, with 8 being present.

Document List

Orthophotography of State Hospital Map – Jim Robbins & Brian Bush
DPOD Extension October 2015 Town Meeting Article – Jim Robbins & Brian Bush
Downtown Overlay Districts Zoning Map – Jim Robbins & Brian Bush
Article 4 – Downtown Planning Overlay District Zoning Amendment – Jim Robbins & Brian Bush
Country Club Roof Project (7,000 Sq/Ft) – Gary Wells
Message to Town Voters – Revision D – Gary Wells

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Thomas,
AFC Administrative Assistant