

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

At 7:02 p.m. Mr. Wells called the meeting to order in Memorial Hall of the Town Hall.

Open Forum

There was no one here to address the Committee.

Approval of Past Minutes

Meeting No. 20, February 16, 2016

Mr. Behn made a motion to approve the minutes of 2/16/16. Voted: 7-0-1 (abstention: Tepper).

Budget and Warrant Article Review/Votes – Continued

Re-vote Updated Police Budget: Mr. Wells provided new numbers for the Police Department. He noted that their budget was reduced by about \$11,000. The approved value of the Police Department's budget was \$3,062,320 at the last AFC meeting, however, after corrections to their salary account; they are now looking for approval on \$3,050,864. Mr. Wells explained that the decrease was due to an officer retiring, hiring a replacement at a lower salary, and a reevaluation. Mr. Behn referred to the motion for Article 7 for the FY17 Operating Budgets and made a motion that we recommend that the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two Million Nine Hundred Forty One Thousand Five Hundred Thirty Eight (\$2,941,538) for the Police Department's Salary & Wages and One Hundred Nine Thousand Three Hundred Twenty Six (\$109,326) for the Police Department's Expenses. Voted: 8-0-0.

Alternate Language Article 20E, Residency Requirement: Mr. Tepper informed the Committee that he took the initiative to draft an alternate motion for Article 20E regarding the Residency Requirement for the Town Manager, Police Chief, Fire Chief, and DPW Manager. Mr. Behn noted that there are two retirements coming up within the next few years for the Police Chief and DPW Manager and there are people in the queue to take over those positions. He was concerned with eliminating those folks since it may be an extreme hardship for them to be forced to move to town. Mr. Tepper pointed out that employees are grandfathered in until this change goes in to effect, which he felt could be up to two years from now. Ms. Blazejewski noted that if this change is approved then she thought it would go in to effect within the next legislative year and that we would be dealing with the employees currently in those positions right now. Mr. Rauch noted that, if this change is voted in and it does go in to effect in the next legislative year, then the employee is allowed another year beyond that before they have to move to town. He felt that the hiring process could take six months, so we could be looking at a 2 ½ year window. Ms. Blumberg didn't agree with the way the article was written since a current employee would still be grandfathered in twenty years from now. Mr. Rauch agreed and stated that the Committee should support the change that Mr. Tepper is suggesting. Mr. Wells mentioned that Police Chief, Al Gordon, and DPW Manager, John Walden, are the next employees holding two of these positions that are anticipated to retire. He mentioned that Chief Gordon has to retire at age 65 but he wasn't sure if that was a mandatory requirement for the DPW Manager as well. Mr. Wells pointed out that anyone aware of the opening and thinking of applying would possibly have a three year window to move to town if this article passes. Mr. Behn was again concerned with losing candidates because of this residency requirement. Mr. Tepper felt that we would be able to find a viable candidate despite this requirement. Mr. Rauch agreed and thought that if we kept the current language the way it is we could be looking at a possible thirty year period for grandfathering in an employee. Mr. Wells reminded the Committee that the AFC voted this article down and that they could make an alternate motion on Town Meeting floor. He felt this could be a hot button issue. Mr. Wells pointed out that the AFC could submit alternate wording

to Article 20E and let the voters decide on Town Meeting floor whether they accept or reject it. Ms. Blazejewski noted that they would start with the amendment and then work their way back to the main motion. Ms. Blumberg wanted the AFC to take a vote so people know how they feel about this issue. Mr. Wells mentioned that right now the AFC's recommendation in the R&R Book is that we recommend the Town vote to defeat this article as printed in the warrant. Mr. Wells stated that he will inform Town Moderator, John Arnold, that the AFC has an alternate motion to present at Town Meeting. It was noted that the wording of the article cannot be changed prior to Town Meeting since the warrant is closed. Mr. Behn felt that it was the AFC's job to make residents aware of what the AFC recommends prior to Town Meeting. Mr. Rauch asked if the AFC could let residents know that they have an amendment to the motion being offered before Town Meeting. Ms. Blumberg wanted to also have the AFC take a vote on the amendment. Mr. Rauch pointed out that Mr. Tepper's motion is to strike the last sentence of the current article where it says "This residency requirement shall not apply to any employee **of the Town employed** at the time of adoption of this section of the Charter" and replace with "This residency requirement shall not apply to any employee **currently filling these positions** at the time of adoption of this section of the Charter". Mr. Wells called for a vote. Voted: 5-3-0. Mr. Wells noted that the motion to offer this as a recommendation by the AFC to the Town has passed and he will add it to the R&R book.

Alternate Language Article 20Q, Action on the Budget: Mr. Behn wanted to change the language in this article from the first scheduled meeting of the Board of Selectmen (BOS) in January to the first scheduled meeting of the BOS in February so people have time to review the budget. Mr. Wells felt this change made sense from a timing issue since the AFC hasn't had a chance to review the budget with the Town Manager, nor have they been able to meet with the major department heads regarding their budgets. There was a discussion about the purpose of having a joint meeting and Mr. Behn noted that it is more of an opportunity for a public hearing. Mr. Rauch felt there was more transparency if the public is able to make comments early on in the budget process rather than after the AFC has started deliberations. Ms. Blazejewski pointed out that all public meetings are posted and that anyone can attend at any time, however, this article is specifically referring to the joint meeting. Mr. Rauch wasn't sure that the AFC knew any more in February than they do in January since they haven't formed any opinions or taken any votes. Mr. Behn thought that the AFC did know more since they've had time to interview departments and begin review of the R&R book. He noted that having the joint meeting in February gives residents an opportunity to look at the budget. It was pointed out that the BOS hosts the joint meeting. Mr. Tepper commented that the AFC attends the joint meeting but he didn't feel it was truly a joint meeting. He felt that there should be dynamics to bring the three Committees together equally (the BOS, AFC, and Capital Expenditures). Mr. Behn said that he hoped the three Chairs would host the meeting, along with having a quorum from each of these Committees. Mr. Behn made a motion to strike the word "January" from the motion and replace with "February" for Article 20Q. Mr. Rauch confirmed that the AFC will be offering this amendment on Town Meeting floor, and said that he would feel more comfortable if the BOS and Capital Expenditures Committee are aware of this change before Town Meeting. Ms. Blazejewski suggested sending this amendment to Assistant Town Manager, Kristi Williams, for distribution to the appropriate people on these three Committees. Mr. Wells reminded the AFC about the motion presented by Mr. Behn. Voted: 7-0-1 (abstention: Rauch).

Reports & Recommendations Book for ATM – Review:

Review of Article pages for errors & omissions: Mr. Wells referred to the wording he drafted for Article 8B with the change recommending the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$40,000 and a transfer from free cash for the sum of \$210,000 for the AFC Reserve Fund, rather than a raise and appropriate of the entire \$250,000. He wanted to make sure AFC members were in agreement that this is what will go in the R&R book. The Committee agreed with the wording presented by Mr. Wells. Mr. Wells will ask Mr. Malloy to change the motion.

Message to Voters – Discussion: Mr. Wells mentioned the "Message to the Voters" in the R&R book and pointed out that he added paragraphs specifically addressing the Charter articles, the State Hospital, the Forbes Building renovation, the Pre-K to 3rd Grade School Building Committee, and the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee as major items. He asked Committee members to let him know if they'd like to see anything else

added and also if they had any punctuation and grammar corrections. Mr. Behn referred to the third paragraph in the Message to the Voters where Mr. Wells mentioned that Insurance Benefits, Retirement, and Debt account for 25% of the total budget. Mr. Wells noted that this was all inclusive, since he added the schools in. Mr. Rauch wanted to talk about sources of revenue since expenses have been discussed. Mr. Driscoll noted Ch 90 funds and Mr. Behn explained how that works. There was a discussion and Mr. Wells asked if he should include something in the Message to the Voters about the proposed fuel tax as a way to make up for the shortfall in Ch 90 funds. Mr. Behn pointed out that the biggest driver to the budget is the insurance. Mr. Wells felt that the increase to insurance has been mitigated over the past few years since expenses have stayed relatively flat. Ms. Blazejewski suggested clearly stating that Insurance is going up by 10% in the Message to the Voters. Mr. Rauch pointed out that 46 new employees were added to the Town's insurance plan this year, plus 5 retirees, and he felt that the factors contributing to this increase should be noted. Mr. Wells said that he will re-word that paragraph.

Regarding the other paragraphs in the Message to the Voters, AFC members wanted to note the cost of the Forbes Building renovations and that, when Forbes is complete, we will have built and updated three municipal buildings (new Fire Station, Town Hall renovations, and Forbes Building renovations) for less than the cost of the proposed Public Safety Complex that was voted down a few years ago. There was discussion as to what should be mentioned about the Pre-K to 3rd Grade School Building Committee. Mr. Wells pointed out that there are two major topics – relocating the Pre-K in to modular units at Hastings Elementary School so it opens up more room, and building a new Fales Elementary School. Mr. Rauch asked if the elementary schools were at capacity and Mr. Wells said they were. The AFC felt the need to let residents know what the \$250,000 being requested will go towards and an idea of future plans.

Financial Reports: Mr. Wells referred to the Financial Revenue & Expenditure Estimates for FY17 in the R&R book. Mr. Behn pointed out that the Water & Sewer Enterprise Funds for revenue and expenses have always been shown as equaling out in prior years; however, that was not how they were being presented now. Mr. Wells said that he has had a long discussion with Town Accountant, Leah Talbot, and she mentioned that the Town does generate revenue on the Water, Sewer, and Waste Water Treatment Enterprise Funds. Mr. Wells pointed out that we should net out over \$4 million on the revenue side. There was a discussion as to where that money goes and Mr. Rauch noted that the money is only allowed to go back in to these enterprise funds. Mr. Wells will check back in with the Town Accountant but felt his numbers matched hers. There was another discussion about the figures on the R&E report. Mr. Wells suggested grouping together costs for the Schools, Town, and then showing the Enterprise Funds separately. Mr. Tepper thought that the revenue should be taken out. Mr. Behn agreed and mentioned taking the excess revenue and showing that amount under expenses as user fees since that's what it is for.

Mr. Wells referenced the Free Cash & Retained Earning Transfers Report in the R&R book. He mentioned that the only item that has changed on that page is for the \$210,000 coming out of Free Cash for the AFC Reserve Fund. It was noted that last year the Town voted to use \$1.5 million in Free Cash and then needed another \$950,000 by the end of the fiscal year due to snow. The Committee felt that Free Cash reserves were at acceptable levels.

Mr. Wells asked the Committee to review the pages in the R&R book, particularly those pages concerning information on the articles, and let him know if they see any errors or omissions. Mr. Behn pointed out that the "Town Meeting Index of Articles and Summary Recommendations" format is different than what has been done in the past. Mr. Wells mentioned that he was trying to save space in the R&R book since it's already at 56 pages. Mr. Behn referred to the format from last year and noted that voters can see the recommendations, amounts, and how we are borrowing. The Committee was in agreement that they preferred to see the vote count, the amount of each article, and the recommendation in one spot rather than flipping pages back and forth. Mr. Wells said that he will add the dollar values for the articles.

Summary Index – Confirm Votes: Mr. Wells mentioned that he will check with Mr. Malloy as to how the Board of Selectmen voted and confirm the count.

Committee Liaison and Department Liaison Reports

None

Comments and Concerns – Committee Members

None

Public Reminders for Viewers

Mr. Wells reminded the public that the Boy Scout Pancake Breakfast is this Sunday, March 6th, at the Knights of Columbus.

Adjournment

Mr. Behn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:24 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 8-0-0 in favor, with 8 being present.

Document List

None

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Thomas,
AFC Administrative Assistant