

Members Present: Ian Johnson, Chair, Cliff Watts, Ronn Moody, Jo Lown, Carolyn Spring, John Arnold, Judy Lucas (arrived 7:20 p.m.). Absent: Brigitte Casemyr.

At 7:06 p.m. Mr. Johnson called the meeting to order in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Approval of minutes – Deferred.

Approval of minutes was deferred until the next scheduled meeting.

Discussion on Topics for Prop. 2 ½ Primer

Henry Danis, Town Coordinator, has agreed to put together a primer on Proposition 2 ½. Joe Harrington, Town Moderator, has agreed to attend.

The Advisory Finance Committee wishes to be prepared if this comes up at Annual Town Meeting. The Massachusetts Municipal Association has posted two articles of interest on their web site at www.mma.org in the Proposition 2½ Resource Area:

“Levy Limits: A Primer on Proposition 2½”

<http://www.mma.org/images/stories/AbtLocalGov/levylimits.pdf>

“Proposition 2½ Ballot Questions: Requirements and Procedures”

<http://www.mma.org/images/stories/AbtLocalGov/propballotquestions.pdf>

The 2006 Finance Committee Handbook also has information.

Members discussed several specific topics for discussion. Questions from the committee include:

If the town votes to spend over the levy limit, what happens then?

If in a re-vote of articles the town is still over the levy limit, what is the next step?

At what point can the ATM be dissolved with a budget that is over the limit?

Should the AFC provide a contingency budget?

Does the town need to come out of ATM with a balanced budget, with other budgets and articles approved contingent upon an override?

What is the AFC's obligation to recommend a balanced budget? Committee members feel that the committee has a moral obligation to do this, but not a legal obligation.

Ms. Lown requested that Articles and budgets be flagged as contingent as votes are taken by the committee. Mr. Watts suggested doing this before votes are taken. Mr. Arnold asked if the levy capacity has been set, or if it could still change. Mr. Arnold also suggested each committee member should go through the department and committee budgets and determine which they feel could be deemed contingent, then discuss these determinations as a committee. Mr. Johnson said the levy limit is set except for the New Growth figures. At this time, the Articles and Budgets as presented are not over the levy limit. However, there are three contracts being negotiated currently, two in the School Department and one in the Fire Department. He agreed with Mr. Arnold that each committee member should determine for themselves what would be the best course of action. Ms. Lown suggested comparing budgets year to year by department to look for possible room to make cuts if necessary. Mr. Johnson noted that the State reimbursement figures have been set by the House and Senate Resolution, and will not go lower. If a contract is settled on 5/16, how do we respond? Mr. Johnson feels the

AFC should look at all possibilities now. Ms. Lown asked for definite process and procedures guidelines for Proposition 2 ½. Mr. Moody requested specific language to use during the process of re-voting. Mr. Arnold asked for an updated one-page sheet showing the exact levy limits.

Discussion on Calendar – Voting Schedule

Committee members went over the scheduling for the next two weeks in April. Ms. Dunkle will request a presentation by the Board of Selectmen on April 17. The committee asked for more information from the Planning Board about the rezoning Article recently added to the warrant. The presentation schedule is:

- April 10 – 7:10 p.m., DPW Stormwater Management Article; 7:30 p.m., Proposition 2 ½ Primer
- April 14 – 7:10 p.m., School Department budget presentation
- April 17 – voting on budgets and Articles by AFC Committee

The final AFC booklet for Annual Town Meeting must be at the printer by May 8th. Ms. Lown noted that the WWTP bids open on May 8th, and the Board vote to accept a bid is May 14th. Committee members pointed out that the WWTP spending will not affect the levy limit, and so the AFC may need to make a recommendation before the final numbers are known. The AFC may always change the recommendation on town meeting floor if more information is received.

Liaison Updates

- Ms. Lucas gave a report on the School Committee meeting held on 4/2/08. Transportation cuts were discussed, but more information was requested and no decision was made. Dr. Towle has identified \$1.2 Million in cuts to her requested budget, including 1 full-time administrator, 7.1 teachers and paraprofessionals, 0.5 clerical positions, Jobs for Baystate Graduates program, \$40,000 from athletics, \$40,000 from Fine Arts, and \$134,000 in supplies and textbooks, among other things. The Department will add two more sessions of Full-day Kindergarten. This budget does not include money for teacher or paraprofessional contract settlements. The committee discussed the impact in dollars of each percentage point in raises in the contract. AFC members can calculate this figure. Mr. Watts noted that although Steve Doret was out of town, he participated in the meeting by conference call.
- Ms. Lucas and Mr. Watts will meet with Gene Carlo on 4/17. Mr. Carlo has accepted the AFC offer to not make a presentation this year, as he has presented the same information to the Board of Selectmen.
- Ms. Lown gave a list of specific questions on the Stormwater Management Article to Carl Balduf of the DPW. These questions cover the State Mandated standards, the time commitment and cost to the town of permitting, inspection, and enforcement of the regulations, specifying who would be charged with reviewing the non-mandated portion of the regulations, and concerns about the language in the non-mandated sections such as not defining the term “stockpiling.”
- Mr. Johnson noted information given to Committee members in their folders, including details on radio read meters, fuel consumption by department, and Chapter 90 money certified at \$616,424 for Westborough.

Snow & Ice Budget Deficit Spending Requests

Committee reviewed a request from John Walden, Manager, DPW, to allow deficit spending on the Snow Budget, Expenses of an additional \$12,000. Mr. Moody moved acceptance of this request. The vote to approve the deficit spending request was 7 in favor, with 7 members being present. The total deficit spending authorization to date is \$245,000 for the Snow Budget, Expenses, and \$75,000 for the Snow Budget, Wages.

Adjournment

At 8:10 p.m. Mr. Watts moved to adjourn the meeting. The vote to adjourn was unanimous (6 members present and in favor).