

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting No. 23 FY2007
April 19, 2007

Approved
May 3, 2007

Members Present: Ian Johnson, Chair, Judy Lucas, Cliff Watts, Ronn Moody, Jo Lown, Polly Howard, John Arnold, J. J. Malone (arrived 7:12 p.m.), Carolyn Spring (arrived 7:14 p.m.). Absent: None.

At 7:03 p.m. Mr. Johnson called the meeting to order in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

Open Forum

Anna Tortora appeared before the committee to express her concern with the committee's vote in support of Article 27 and Article 28, and against Article 29. She is concerned that the town is not taking care of historical buildings, and is upset that the Nathan Fisher House may be sold to a developer and torn down. She has spoken with many townspeople, including a descendant of Nathan Fisher, who also expressed concern about our town's history.

Budget Review – Council on Aging

Alma Demanche, Senior Center Director, Barbara Christie, Council on Aging Chairman, Ann Johnson, Vice-Chairman, Charles Flood, and F. Robert Brown presented the Council on Aging budget request of \$248,582, and an additional personnel increase.

The Council would like to increase the hours of the Outreach Coordinator from 19 hours/week to 25 hours/week. The person in this position sees many people in many types of situations. The Personnel Board has approved an additional 19-hour position, but the Council would like to increase the hours on the existing position to retain the current Coordinator and avoid the process of hiring another person. They feel that the people who use these services do not like change and they do like her. No other agency, public or private, in town provides this type of case management. The current employee is well loved and respected by her clients. She is currently working well over 19 hours. The Council is trying to be fiscally responsible and not ask for more than is absolutely necessary. They seldom ask the town for anything, but there is a great need in town for these services. This need is always increasing. The requested increase in hours would mean an increase of \$5,898 in salary.

Ms. Wilfert of the Personnel Board pointed out that an increase to 25 hours would make the position a union position and could increase the pay scale. An additional PT position would avoid making the position a union position, as well as avoid the need to offer benefits. This new position is included in Warrant Article 6.

Dr. Malone pointed out that benefits continue into retirement and due to the rules governing the unfunded liability of retiree health insurance could be quite costly to the town in the future.

Ms. Demanche noted that the Council has taken these factors into account. The current Outreach Coordinator took six months to hire. The position requires a BA in Social Work with a specialization in gerontology and prior work experience. The current Outreach Coordinator holds a Master's degree in Social Work.

Ms. Lown asked if the current Coordinator has received a grade increase. She has not, but Ms. Wilfert agreed that the Personnel Board would be open to this discussion. The Personnel Board may also be open to further discussion about this position if a second part time coordinator does not work out after 6-9 months, and asked that the Council on Aging come back to see the Board.

Expense increases include the following:

Line 5203 Repair/Maintenance Equipment – \$2,200 increase includes funds for brakes and tires for the buses, as well as the regular small repairs and phones for the buses.

Line 5219 Professional Services -- \$21,805 increase requested to expand nursing services by 2 days/week at \$25/hour. The nurse is currently paid through a grant for 1 day/week and the need for her services has increased. She currently sees 30 clients/day. The Personnel Board has created an unfunded position to use in the event the grant diminishes or ends, so that the nurse could continue her 1 day/week. The grant is for \$16,000 and covers the nurse and the handyman.

Mr. Johnson requested a ruling from the Town Counsel to make sure this is an appropriate use of a professional services contract.

Ms. Demanche noted that in April the bus made 341 trips.

Article Review – ARTICLE 41. Request to Repair Culvert (Citizens' Petition)

Russell Kassatly, Thomas Rizzo, James Cavaretta, and Rod Thompson appeared before the committee to discuss their citizen's petition to replace the existing compromised (rotting & flattened) four foot steel culvert pipe at 50 Warren Street with a concrete box culvert as recommended by study. In October 2005 there was serious flooding requiring evacuation of several houses by the fire department. Flooding occurred again on April 16, 2007. Owners of the properties have discussed the issue with the DPW and with the Board of Selectmen. They are supporting a plan to replace the existing culvert with a concrete box culvert with a cross sectional area larger than that of the existing pipe so as to accommodate rate of flow from Jack Straw Brook to prevent the likelihood of further flooding. This is one of several options proposed in a study commissioned by the DPW. The box culvert replacement will cost \$200,000, will have an increased life expectancy, but will also take several years to get the necessary permits to begin construction. The DPW is in favor of a plan to repair the culvert, which is another option proposed in the study. The repair would cost \$85,000, would not increase the expected life of the culvert, would reduce the original flow capacity of the culvert (although the flow capacity would increase from its current state), but could be done sooner. In October 2005 Mr. Kassatly's house suffered \$8,000 in damages and Mr. Rizzo's house suffered \$20,000 in damages.

Article Review – ARTICLE 16. Update and Print Open Space Plan (Open Space Preservation Committee)

David Freed and Mary Stanton of the Open Space Preservation Committee presented their request for funding to update the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. This is a 200-page document that gives a comprehensive listing of all open space in town. It was last updated in 2003 and will expire after 2008 (plans of this type are only valid for 5 years.) The plan must be current in order to apply for matching grants from the State. The committee currently has 9 members, including 4 representatives from other committees. The \$15,000 would cover a consultant to update and write the plan, and printing costs. The MIS/GIS Department provides maps, the consultant would cost \$5,000 - \$8,000. Mr. Freed will provide a breakdown of the budget for the project. The Committee has not yet applied for any grants, but is hoping to apply for State matching grants if the town accepts the parcel at 169A Main Street.

Approval of minutes – Meetings No. 21, April 12, 2007

Mr. Watts moved approval of the minutes of Meeting No. 21, April 12, 2007. The vote to approve the minutes was 9 in favor with 9 members present.

Liaison Updates

Ms. Spring will speak to the Town Counsel about the nurse position and the possibility of town liability at Warren Street.

Ms. Lucas spoke to Dr. Olson about the reconciliation of classroom teachers requested by Mr. Watts. The School Committee plan is to add 4.4 classroom teachers (1.4 HS, 1 Hastings, 1 Fales, 1 Mill Pond) and decrease 1 teacher (kindergarten) for a net increase of 3.4. The Administrator (grant writer) position is included in the budget. The AFC consensus after discussion was to ask the School Committee to limit their budget to the Coordinator's recommended budget.

Dr. Malone spoke with Ms. Talbot about a 19-hour DPW employee. Ms. Talbot pointed out that this person would be the only employee at the DPW who would not be in the union and not be receiving benefits.

Overtime would also be an issue. Morale may be hard to maintain given these conditions. The DPW has no provision in the organization table for this type of position. Dr. Malone spoke with Mr. Danis about the position and he agreed to take out the money currently and make a decision in the fall. Ms. Lown reported that during her discussions with John Walden, he indicated that the state recommends the work be done yearly, but there is currently no penalty or fine imposed for not doing so.

Ms. Lown also checked her notes from last year's purchase and design funds for the Vee-Arc Building and demolition was not included.

Ms. Howard gave several schedule updates.

Mr. Arnold spoke with Joe Lawrence, MIS/GIS Administrator, about Line 5203 in his budget. These funds are to begin replacing town computers purchased 5 years ago. The line is used for all computer and network hardware. Mr. Moody asked for an estimate of the number of machines and what departments they are in. Ms. Lown would like to know if this is going to be a yearly expense.

Ms. Howard spoke to Ms. Yendriga about a 19-hour position in the Town Clerk's office. The cost for this position would be \$20,927 at level S16.

Mr. Johnson spoke with the Ms. Schradieck about the Citizen's Petition to rezone one parcel on Summer Street as residential. At this time, the citizens are planning to request Town Meeting vote to pass over this article. The lawyer for Village Lumber is now looking to rezone a portion of 46 Summer Street. Ms. Schradieck feels the neighbors would be amenable to a variance, which would only apply to Village Lumber and not to a successive owner/business. Mr. Johnson will contact Mr. Robbins of the Planning Board.

Mr. Johnson would like to continue voting and discuss recommendations on the AFC booklet at the next meeting.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

Mr. Arnold discussed the Articles concerning the Town Bylaws and Town Charter with the Government Study Committee, and the consensus is that the articles will not do any harm since further recommendations will take several years. The Government Study Committee is comfortable with the articles, although they are neither for nor against.

Dr. Malone got information about the Worcester Retirement System from Ms. Bilodeau and will put it in each folder.

Mr. Johnson has gotten the Warrant in Word format and will begin to add votes and recommendations to the booklet. The booklet must be finalized by Monday May 6 in order to get it printed by May 12.

Adjournment

At 9:25 p.m. Mr. Watts moved to adjourn the meeting. The vote to adjourn was unanimous (9 present and in favor).