

Members Present: Ian Johnson, Chair, Judy Lucas, Cliff Watts, Ronn Moody, J. J. Malone, Jo Lown (left 9:10 p.m.), Polly Howard, John Arnold, Carolyn Spring (arrived 7:12 p.m.). Absent: None.

At 7:04 p.m. Mr. Johnson called the meeting to order in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Mr. Johnson called the committee members' attention to several items in their folders.

Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Article Review – ARTICLE 30. Amend Town Bylaws (Citizens' Petition)

Charlotte Bramley appeared before the committee to state her reasons for asking the town to change the date of town meeting from May to March. Historically ATM has been held in March. The change was made in order to get clearer financial information from the Legislature, which has not happened in her opinion. May is a very busy month and attendance at ATM is not always good. Ms. Bramley picked the 3rd Tuesday rather than the 1st Tuesday on the advice of other town officials. Dr. Malone stated that last year we did have both the Governor's budget and the House budget, although the Senate was still in discussion. This year, if ATM were held in March we would have had no financial information from the State. This year by May we do have good information due to a Legislative Joint Agreement. Ms. Bramley has had good response from townspeople in support of the March ATM. Ms. Bramley stated that if the townspeople wanted to amend the Article to change the date to the 1st Tuesday in March she would be amenable.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

Mr. Johnson reported that Mr. Harrington has noted several questions of scope in the Articles and proposed amendments to those articles in the Warrant this year. The posted warrant articles warn the Town of the possibility of a financial obligation. Articles may be general and need not state every detail of every option offered. They do, however, set some limits on what may be entertained. An amendment to any article may not ask for more of a commitment than what is in the posted warrant. For example, the Police Department in Article 9E is seeking three new vehicles. They may amend their request to ask for two vehicles or one vehicle, but not four vehicles as that goes beyond the article in the warrant.

Budget Review – Department of Public Works

John Walden and Henry Danis appeared before the committee to discuss the questioned gate valve and hydrant exercising budget expense. Adding personnel to do this work will take time. Mr. Walden is requesting ½ of the funding for this to give him time to evaluate the contract work and explore a part-time position, while still beginning the work. He will report back in the fall with more information. The requested additional \$42,500 would fund all of the work for ½ of the time. This work needs to begin as it has been put off for many years already. There are no fines looming at this time, but it is negligent to run a system without paying attention to the gate valves.

Mr. Walden would also like to request funding one of two currently unfunded positions in the Highway Department. This department cut positions several years ago during tight fiscal times and has not recovered. The position would be for a laborer / truck driver for general maintenance. Currently the department has trouble covering vacations and sick time while keeping up with day-to-day work. Mr. Walden has had to contract out more work just to get it completed. There are jobs that the DPW could do more effectively and cost efficiently if they had the manpower. Currently there are 21 positions in this department and 2 are unfunded. Mr. Walden would like to hire now for the busy summer season.

Mr. Danis stated that he did ask for no new hires and no replacements. He has seen all the departments requests for personnel and feels that the DPW request is most compelling. This would not return their staffing to prior levels.

Ms. Spring inquired if Mr. Walden would be willing to trade one of the requested vehicles for this staff position? Mr. Walden replied that he hoped not to have to do this. He is trying to get back to the staffing level of 5 years ago. Mr. Danis noted that the equipment requests were not for additional vehicles but for replacement vehicles, and that this department is in the greatest need and should be the highest priority.

Denzil Drewry, candidate for Selectman, noted that Mr. Walden has always been willing to take cuts to his budget and this position has not been replaced.

Selectman Lydia Goldblatt spoke in support of the DPW request. The DPW is always visible in the community and their staffing is down.

Mr. Walden explained the request for a Step 3 position is due to the requirements for licensing and training. Mr. Walden said that if the position is delayed, taxpayers won't get responses to their requests as quickly. Mr. Walden also reiterated that this is not a new position, it is a replacement.

Mr. Moody noted that as the AFC gets to the end of the budgets they may need to make some cuts, and asked Mr. Walden which of the 4 vehicles on his list to purchase would be the lowest priority. Mr. Walden said the 1978 Mack is mostly used for snow removal, but would take some time to set up. The 1984 4WD truck could probably limp through the summer if we need to wait until fall for one purchase. Dr. Malone stated that he feels if we are sure it will go through in the fall we gain nothing by waiting. Mr. Moody stated his concerns about the number of vehicles on lease/purchase agreements. These leases obligate the town to make payments for several years. Mr. Watts asked if the sidewalk tractor would be useful if it was purchased in the fall, and it would be. Mr. Johnson noted that the price may go up as the bid is good until May 12. Ms. Spring suggested contacting the bidder to ask for an extension.

Article Review – ARTICLE 25. Appropriate to Stabilization Fund (Town Coordinator)

Mr. Danis noted that the amount may be changed, and the transfer is mostly to let the bond market know that the town is saving something. Mr. Danis feels the stabilization fund should ideally be at 5% of the operating budget.

Article Review – ARTICLE 31. Amend Town Bylaws (Town Coordinator)

Mr. Danis gave his plan for this article on the own meeting schedule. If Article 30 passes, he will move to approve Article 31A. If Article 30 does not pass, he will pass over Article 31A and go on to Article 31B. Article 31B will be voted on regardless of the outcome of Article 30.

Budget Review – MIS/GIS Department

Joe Lawrence, MIS/GIS Administrator, appeared before the committee to answer questions about his budget request for increased hardware. 90% of the computers in town offices were purchased five and four years ago. MIS/GIS would like to upgrade to Windows XP Pro from Windows 2000. This will require the purchase of new licenses. These would be spread out throughout the town departments. Ms. Lown asked if the department is evaluating need and usage. Mr. Lawrence replied that some departments are happy with what they have, but the machines are getting older. The Police, Fire, and Engineering Departments embrace new technology and use it well. The \$15,000 increase in the budget will buy 15 – 20 computers. The Town has 87 desktop computers. Mr. Johnson asked if this budget request would be recurring. Mr. Lawrence replied that it would be. There is always some money requested in this line for repairs/replacements. The increase would allow for the replacement of approximately 25% of the computers this year. Not every office needs the same computer. When purchased in bulk we went with Dell and they don't need much maintenance. The purchase is for a base standard and then higher levels for specific users. All data is backed up on a shared drive, and also on some external drives.

Liaison Updates

Ms. Lucas spoke to Dr. Olson last week and would like to postpone discussion until Thursday.
Mr. Johnson has gotten more information about the \$7,000 amount questioned.

Discussion and votes on various FY2008 budgets and Warrant Articles

A table of votes taken is attached to these minutes.

There was discussion about personnel positions in several budgets. After much deliberation about the individual requests, the committee came to a consensus that these requests should be put on the table all at one time in order to prioritize them. There are needs in many places and all are compelling. At this time, since there are also multiple union contracts under negotiation, the AFC will hold to the position of strongly encouraging no new hires until the anticipated fall town meeting. It is the hope of the committee that union settlements will be known by the fall and the town will then have the most accurate financial information. Mr. Johnson will send a letter to the departments and the Personnel Board explaining the AFC position on this issue.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

Dr. Malone has been following the Shrewsbury losses on auto excise income. Westborough may not be immune. Ms. Talbot is watching this. Receipts may need to be adjusted.

Mr. Johnson asks the committee members to review the booklet and bring comments to the Thursday meeting. Trust funds are the same as last year.

Adjournment

At 10:12 p.m. Mr. Watts moved to adjourn the meeting. The vote to adjourn was unanimous (9 present and in favor).

Votes taken at the Finance Committee meeting on April 23, 2007

1) Budget votes

Budgets are voted on using figures current as of 4/16/07. (Coordinator's recommendations listed on right.)

MIS/GIS, Dept. No. 11541, 11543 Salary \$64,577, Expenses \$187,900, Total \$252,477
Mr. Watts moved to accept the \$64,577 salary and \$187,900 expenses.
Vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

Central Purchasing, Dept. No. 11583 Expenses \$96,000, Total \$96,000
Mr. Watts moved to accept the \$96,000 expenses.
Vote to approve the budget recommendation is unanimous, 9 in favor with 9 being present.

Town Clerk, Dept. No. 11611, 11613 Salary \$57,107, Expenses \$4,050, Total \$61,157
Note – salary for elected official was voted on 4/16/07.
Mr. Watts moved to accept the \$57,107 salary and \$4,050 expenses.
Vote to approve the budget recommendation is 6 in favor and 3 opposed (Howard, Spring, Lucas) with 9 being present.

Council on Aging, Dept. No. 15411, 15413 Salary \$197,277, Expenses \$30,505, Total \$227,782
Mr. Johnson notes that Mr. Harrington will not allow amendment on town meeting floor to change Article 6 as proposed by Ms. Demanche.
Ms. Spring has consulted Town Counsel about nurse contract work. In order to maintain status as contract worker she must make her own hours, carry her own insurance, be paid outside the Personnel Board pay scales, not be paid through town funds (be issued a 1099 vs. a W-2), and use her own equipment. If grant funding ends, then position would become a town employee.
Mr. Watts moved to accept the \$197,277 salary and \$30,505 expenses, which is the coordinator's recommendation and includes no change to positions at Council on Aging.
Vote to approve the budget recommendation is 8 in favor and 1 recusal (Spring) with 9 being present.

DPW Water Enterprise Fund, Dept. No. 64503 Expenses \$1,586,787
Mr. Johnson moved to accept the \$1,546,787 expenses requested by Mr. Walden this evening.
Vote to approve the budget recommendation is 3 in favor (Spring, Johnson, Malone) and 6 opposed with 9 being present. The original motion for expenses \$1,504,287 passed on 4/16/07 stands.

Dept. of Public Works, Dept. No. 14201, 14203
Vote is on request to fund one currently unfunded position, making the new budget request Salary \$1,341,699, Expenses \$646,457, Total \$1,988,156
Mr. Watts moved to recommend considering this position in the fall. Mr. Arnold amends this to add that we have heard compelling need for discussion of numerous positions and we recommend the town consider positions in a more complete context in the fall.
Vote to approve the recommendation is 8 in favor and 1 opposed (Howard) with 9 being present.

2) Warrant article votes

ARTICLE 35. Revisions to Home Rule Charter (Board of Selectmen)

Dr. Malone moved to recommend town vote to approve all section of this article.
Vote to approve the article recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

ARTICLE 36. Revisions to Town By-laws (Board of Selectmen)

Dr. Malone moved to recommend town vote to approve all section of this article.

Vote to approve the article recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

ARTICLE 6. Amend Salary Administration Plan (Personnel Board)

Dr. Malone moved to strike the portion pertaining to the Council on Aging and to strike the portion pertaining to the Town Clerk's Office, and to recommend town vote to approve remaining sections of this article. Mr. Johnson says it is the Personnel Board motion and we could note the positions are not funded.

Vote to approve the article recommendation is 7 in favor and 1 recusal (Spring) with 8 being present.

ARTICLE 12. Improvements to Library Building (Library Board of Trustees)

Mr. Arnold moved to recommend the town vote to transfer \$10,000 to install wireless capability in the Library from Library Trust Funds A, and to raise and appropriate \$52,250, for a total of \$62,250.

Vote to approve the article recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

ARTICLE 13. Various Capital and Repair Items (School Committee)

Mr. Johnson moved to recommend the town vote to raise and appropriate \$176,641, transfer \$2994 from Article 15B of the 2006 ATM, transfer \$9,421 from FY2006 School Encumbrance, transfer \$170,944 from FY2007 Insurance Expense, and transfer \$20,000 from Article 15D of the 2006 ATM, for a total of \$380,000.

Vote to approve the article recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

ARTICLE 15. Lease/Purchase Sidewalk Tractor for DPW (DPW Manager)

Mr. Johnson moved to recommend the town vote to raise and appropriate \$21,410.

Vote to approve the article recommendation is 3 in favor (Howard, Malone, Johnson) and 5 opposed with 8 being present.

Mr. Moody moved to recommend the town defeat this article and add note to defer until fall.

Vote to approve the article recommendation is 5 in favor and 3 opposed (Howard, Malone, Johnson) with 8 being present.

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

Dr. Malone pointed out the revised warrant request and budget presented by Mr. Freed.

Dr. Malone moved to recommend the town vote to raise and appropriate \$10,000.

Vote to approve the article recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

ARTICLE 22. Town Buildings Space Needs Analysis (Municipal Building Committee)

Ms. Spring moved to recommend the town vote to defeat this article.

Dr. Malone commented that we do need an analysis, but maybe not a \$95,000 one. Mr. Johnson noted that by going ahead with this now without having determined feasibility of a Public Safety Complex, we could end up doing two studies. Ms. Howard stated this does need to be done. Mr. Watts stated that when we know if we have a Public Safety Building or a Fire Station, then we will need this done. Mr. Arnold wanted to be sure this would not halt work on Public Safety Building.

Vote to approve the article recommendation is 7 in favor and 1 opposed (Moody) with 8 being present.

Dr. Malone pointed out that funding for this article was anticipated in transfers, so that money is still available.

ARTICLE 23. Demolition of Town Owned Building (Municipal Building Committee)

Mr. Johnson moved to recommend the town vote to transfer \$50,379 from free cash, transfer \$185 from Article 20B of the 2001 ATM, transfer \$1,403 from Article 23 of the 2006 ATM, transfer \$5,520 from Article 41 of the 1998 ATM, transfer \$91,078 from Article 35 of the 2005 ATM, transfer \$8,762 from Article 40 of

the 2005 ATM, transfer \$10,000 from FY2006 Insurance Expense, transfer \$62,673 from Article 13 of the 2006 ATM, for a total of \$230,000.

Vote to approve the article recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

ARTICLE 25. Appropriate to Stabilization Fund (Town Coordinator)

Ms. Spring moved to recommend the town vote to raise and appropriate \$100,000.

Vote to approve the article recommendation is 7 in favor and 1 opposed (Malone) with 8 being present.

ARTICLE 30. Amend Town Bylaws (Citizens' Petition)

Mr. Watts moved to recommend the town vote to defeat this article.

Mr. Arnold comments that we need a larger sample size before reconsidering a move to March. Mr. Johnson notes that there is definitely better financial information in May.

Vote to approve the article recommendation is 7 in favor and 1 opposed (Howard) with 8 being present.

ARTICLE 39. Request to Rezone Property (Citizens Petition)

Mr. Johnson has spoken with Mr. Robbins and the petitioner is still working with the town counsel to draft an amendment to change the Article so that only the rear portion of 46 Summer Street is rezoned. Mr. Johnson feels that rezoning is not the right way to handle this issue and that a variance should be considered.

Mr. Johnson moved to recommend the town vote to defeat this article.

Vote to approve the article recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

ARTICLE 40. Request to Rezone Property (Citizens' Petition)

Mr. Johnson reported that at present time proponents plan to pass over this article.

Mr. Moody moved to recommend that the town vote to defeat this article.

Vote to approve the article recommendation is unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 being present.

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

Ms. Spring has spoken with the Town Counsel about issue of negligence. This falls into the purview of the town to determine the level of repair. It could be considered a nuisance, which is less than negligence.

Mr. Johnson moved to recommend the town vote to defeat this article.

Mr. Johnson notes that the Town Engineer has more expertise and would like to try to correct this problem more quickly.

Vote to approve the article recommendation is 4 in favor and 4 opposed (Spring, Howard, Lucas, Malone) with 8 being present.

Vote is deferred until Thursday.

The Committee notes that a dollar amount will need to be attached to the motion on this article at Town Meeting.