

Westborough Advisory Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting No. 26 FY2007
May 3, 2007

Approved
May 12, 2007

Members Present: Ian Johnson, Chair, Judy Lucas, Cliff Watts, J. J. Malone, Jo Lown, Polly Howard, John Arnold, Ronn Moody (arrived 7:05 p.m.), Carolyn Spring (arrived 7:35 p.m.). Absent: None.

At 7:03 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 – Meetings No. 22, April 16, 2007 and No. 23, April 19, 2007

Mr. Watts moved approval of the minutes of Meeting No. 22, April 16, 2007. The vote to approve the minutes was unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 members present.

Mr. Watts moved approval of the minutes of Meeting No. 23, April 19, 2007. The vote to approve the minutes was unanimous, 8 in favor with 8 members present.

Discussion and votes on various FY2008 budgets and Warrant Articles

A table of votes taken is attached to these minutes.

Booklet Review – Advisory Finance Committee recommendation booklet

The committee discussed what information to present to the Annual Town Meeting, how to present it, and what information to emphasize, going through each page of the draft booklet.

Dr. Malone noted that the recap page estimated a tax rate of \$14.83 / \$1,000 valuation, which for an average priced house is an increase of 8.6%. The committee determined the need to note that this is before any union settlements. The committee discussed how to present the estimated property valuation. Ms. Lown suggested putting a comment in the letter about how property values affect the tax rate, and possible fluctuations and their effects. Mr. Johnson will add this paragraph. Mr. Johnson will add a footnote on the Total Expenditures line on the recap sheet "This number does not include 10 union contracts currently under negotiation."

For Article 7, the committee discussed how to present information about 'step' and 'grade' and the percentage increases included in these charts for S or H grade employees. Each 'step' increase within a 'grade' reflects an approximate 8.2% pay increase, and at max 'step' the cost of living increase is 3%. Mr. Johnson will add this information to the recommendation note.

For the budget pages, Mr. Johnson will add explanatory footnotes to the following budgets: Salaries and Wages - Elected Officials, Legal expenses, MIS/GIS expenses, Elections and Registration, Town Insurances, Assabet Valley, Snow & Ice Removal expenses, DPW expenses, Landfill Contract, Council on Aging expenses, Veteran's Services expenses, Historical Commission expenses, and School Department.

Liaison Updates

Ms. Howard will cancel next week's meetings (5/7 and 5/10) and post the meeting on 5/12 at noon. Minutes of the last three meetings will be approved on 5/12/07.

Comments and Concerns of Committee Members

None.

Adjournment

At 9:12 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 May 3, 2007

1) Warrant article votes

ARTICLE 18B. Work on Town Water System (DPW Manager)

Mr. Johnson moved to recommend town vote to transfer \$35,000 from Article 25C of the 2003 ATM and borrow \$315,000 for the purposes of this article.

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

ARTICLE 29. Restrict use of Property (Citizens' Petition)

Mr. Arnold would like to discuss this article again. The town will have to petition the state to remove deed restrictions, and this will take time. Mr. Arnold suggested that voting to support the deed restriction at this time would allow the town to test the possibilities, and if there were no possible buyers because of the deed restriction it could be removed at a later date. Dr. Malone pointed out that the Selectmen could negotiate a deed restriction even if Article 29 is defeated. Ms. Lown thinks that having a deed restriction in place would allow developers who would be willing to keep the building façade to make their offer. Mr. Johnson thinks this would lower the value of the property. Having a restriction voted at ATM would mean that to remove the restriction the town would have to vote again at another ATM.

Ms. Lown moved to recommend the town vote to support this article. Vote to approve the budget recommendation is 4 in favor (Spring, Arnold, Howard, Lown) and 5 opposed with 9 being present. The recommendation voted on previously stands.

Mr. Arnold moved to recommend the town vote to defeat this article. Vote to approve the budget recommendation is 5 in favor and 4 opposed (Spring, Arnold, Howard, Lown) with 9 being present. The recommendation passes and this vote will be put in the AFC booklet.