

**Amherst Finance Committee Meeting Minutes    Approved 4/30/2018**  
**Thursday, April 5, 2018, 7:00 pm**  
**First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall**

**ATTENDANCE:** Bernie Kubiak, Joseph Jayne, Tim Neale, Janice Ratner (Vice Chair), Anurag Sharma, Marylou Theilman (Chair). Absent: Sharon Povinelli.

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Sonia Aldrich, Co-Finance Director; David Ziomek, Assistant Town Manager/Director, Conservation and Planning; Amherst Media.

Meeting was called to order at 7:06 pm

**AGENDA AND DISCUSSION:**

1. Continue discussion and recommendations of Warrant Articles.

Finalize Positions for Town Meeting.

Ziomek presented Article 20, Acquisition of Easement - Cole Property, and Article 21, Dedication of Use -Groff Park.

**Article 20.** The Cole Property in South Amherst is being developed for 8 home sites which will add to the tax rolls. A parking lot will also be built. Six acres will be donated to the town for conservation. Passage of this article will allow the town to accept the gift of an easement for the public to access the Mount Holyoke Range and the old trolley line.

The Finance Committee voted to **Recommend Article 20**, 5-0, with 2 absent.

**Article 21.** Groff Park, which is a park of about 12 acres located on Mill Lane, will be undergoing over \$1 million worth of improvements including a new spray park, pavilions, etc. The Town has received a Federal grant of \$300,000 to help pay for this project. To receive this grant, the Town must dedicate the park for recreation purposes. (This has been done previously for Mill River and Community Field.) The Town Manager still has authority over the park and LSSE will have care, custody, and control of it.

The Finance Committee voted to **Recommend Article 21**, 5-0, with 2 absent.

**Article 27.** Transfer and Authorization - East Street School to Amherst Municipal Affordable Housing Trust. Ziomek explained that his article would transfer the East Street School and the recreation field behind it to the Housing Trust for affordable housing on site. The property would be transferred from the School Committee to the Select Board to the Trust. Neither the Trust nor the Town will develop the property but will find a developer such as HAP or Valley CDC if a feasibility study shows the property suitable for this type of development. The town would have to approve any development and there would be affordability restrictions on the housing.

This property has been removed from the list of surplus town properties that a new committee is examining. It could be developed into affordable or market rate housing, or it could be demolished. It is now tax-exempt but some housing built on it could be taxable. Currently, the town spends about \$20,000-\$30,000 annually to maintain this property.

The Finance Committee voted to **Recommend Article 27**, 6-0, with 1 absent.

Votes on articles discussed previously:

**Article 1** - Reports - Voted to **Recommend**, 6-0, 1 absent.

**Article 2** - Unpaid bills - Voted to **Recommend**, 6-0, 1 absent. Most likely will be dismissed.

**Article 3** - Optional Tax Exemption - Voted to **Recommend**, 6-0, 1 absent.

**Article 4** - FY 18 Budget Amendments - **Defer** to Town Meeting.

**Article 11** - Bylaw - Revolving Fund Reauthorization - The Municipal Modernization Act allows towns to create a bylaw so that this reauthorization does not have to occur every year as long as the threshold doesn't increase. Currently this is \$400,000 for the After School Program Revolving Fund. Voted to **Recommend**, 6-0, 1 absent.

**Article 13** - Capital Program - Sources of funding: \$260,000 from Ambulance fund and \$876,925 from taxation. Voted to **Recommend**, 6-0, 1 absent.

**Article 18** - PEG Fund for Amherst Media - This article authorizes the borrowing of \$410,000 for Amherst Media over 10 years. The Town will not be paying the interest. Voted to **Recommend**, 6-0, 1 absent.

**Article 25** - Free Cash - **Defer** to Town Meeting to see if needed to balance budget.

**Article 26** - Stabilization Fund - **Defer** to Town Meeting to see if needed to balance budget.

**Article 28** - Agricultural Commission - Voted **No Recommendation**, 6-0, 1 absent

**Article 29** - Zero Energy - This bylaw replaces the previous one but is more workable. There is not enough information to make a recommendation at this time. Voted **No Recommendation**, 6-0, 1 absent.

**Article 30** - Marijuana, non-profit to for profit - No financial implications. Voted **No Recommendation**, 6-0, 1 absent.

**Article 31** - Marijuana uses - Could bring in more revenue but could also cost more for enforcement. Voted **No Recommendation**, 6-0, 1 absent.

**Article 32** - Marijuana retailer locations - Limit to 8 locations. Voted **No Recommendation**, 6-0, 1 absent.

**Article 33** - Supplemental dwellings - Could increase property taxes. Voted to **Recommend**, 6-0, 1 absent.

**Article 34** - Zoning bylaw change to protect wells and septic systems in Outlying Residential areas. Two motions were made and discussed - one to refer article to Planning Board having valid concerns about lot size and septic systems and one to not recommend. Both votes were tied, 3-3 so there was no recommendation made.

**Article 35** - Inclusionary zoning - Encourages more inclusionary zoning in downtown developments and allows for flexibilities such as payment in lieu and building housing in other places. Voted **No Recommendation**, 6-0, 1 absent.

**Article 36** - Inclusionary Zoning, petition - See Article 35. Voted **No Recommendation**, 6-0, 1 absent.

**Article 37** - Noise bylaw - Do not know financial implications. Voted **No Recommendation**, 6-0, 1 absent.

**Article 38** - Prevent Nuclear War - Voted **No Recommendation**, 6-0, 1 absent.

**Article 39** - Paris Climate Agreement - Voted **No Recommendation**, 6-0, 1 absent.

Special Town Meeting

**Article 1** - Special election - Voted **No Recommendation**, 5-1, 1 absent.

**Article 2** - Recession of bylaw to create Town Meeting Advisory Committee - Vote to recommend failed, 2-4, 1 absent. Vote **No Recommendation** passed, 4-2, 1 absent.

2. News affecting the budget. None.

3. Select Board Policy on Unused Municipal Property. Discussed briefly under Article 27.

4. Committee and Liaison Reports. Fire/DPW building committee is scheduled to meet.

5. Minutes. The minutes of the March 22, 2018 Finance Committee meeting were approved by a vote of 6-0, 1 absent.

6. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the chair 48 hours in advance of Meeting. None.

7. Next Meeting:

April 30, 2018, before the first session of Town Meeting at 6:00 pm.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Janice Ratner, acting clerk

Documents distributed and used:

Town Warrant, Annual Town Meeting, April 30, 2018

Town Warrant, Special Town Meeting, April 30, 2018

Finance Committee positions grid, April 5, 2018

Maps of properties related to articles presented by David Ziomek

Community Preservation Act Committee Report, FY 2019

Joint Capital Planning Committee Report, April, 2018