



Town Council Finance Committee Meeting
Tuesday, March 5, 2019, 2:00 pm
Town Room, Amherst Town Hall

Minutes

Committee Members Present: Steinberg, Schoen, Griesemer, Bahl-Milne, Pam

Committee Members Absent: None

Town Staff Present: Sonia Aldrich, Paul Bockelman

Chair Called to Order 2:10 PM

Brief Initial Discussion on Minutes: Vice Chair Schoen agreed to take minutes; decision to rotate continues. We will explore possible support for minutes in the future.

1. Preview March 7 Public Budget Forum

Charter Section 5.3 Calls for first Public Forum on the Budget. Open invitation for public comment. Present priorities, context, revenues and expenditure forecasts, and solicit feedback from the public. Brief presentation by Town Manager, Council President.

Bockelman: Build into format time period for public interaction. Short presentation – 15 minutes. This is new requirement of the Charter. Not done in the past. New meeting to interact with the public – in the past January Select Board and Finance Committee meeting for Manager to present budget for town functions (not library or school). This is new step in the process – get public input earlier is the purpose,

Outline: Purpose of the session. Priorities. Guidelines by Finance Committee and Select Board set last fall. Goal to maintain services. Issues that the Town has been hearing about include: Sustainability and resiliency, roads/sidewalks/cross walks.

- Revenues: Understand constraints. Sources
- Expenditures: where difficult to move around
- FY 19 status and Forecast for FY20
 - What is new on the horizon? What we know and do not know?
 - Health Insurance known. Potential revenues in the future: Airbnb and marijuana, but not know \$ flow
 - Timeline
- Post as part of information for meeting: Financial guidelines. And Select Board Town Manager Goals.
- Separate Operating and Capital Budget: For Public Forum

- Bahl-Milne: Ask for more detail under public safety – police, fire. Town Manager Budget is where some of the pieces can be found
- Large sections and some sub-sections

Sonia Aldrich: Quarterly Reports update the forecasts. These are posted by Finance.

Chair noted to public and Committee that Town Website Includes: budget sections show the budget documents. Can go back in time to see prior year budgets.

Question on how detailed on March 7: Recommendation for now listen to hear from the public. Where should Town priorities be. Context for how to think about the budget

Town Manager will present the budget information: Council President will present the timeline.

Is there a way to solicit comments with topic area?

- Depending on how many people in the audience may want to organize by major topics
- Schoen suggestion to also ask about “your neighborhoods”
- Steinberg: Suggested Paul remind that bottom line of Library and Schools within TM purview but not specifics in the operating budget
- Bockelman agree ask about neighborhood – what matters to you.

Ask name, where live and district

- Question often asked how decisions are made? My road where is it in the queue?

Materials for the Meeting:

1. Agenda with hot link to key materials – electronically can find materials
2. Chart pack: Slide ending with key dates.

Town will also post a form to encourage comments and questions on the budget.

Council members will not make comments or questions during meeting. The time is preserved for public comments and questions. “Council here to listen to you”

2. Discussion of March 2 Four Towns Meeting on the Regional School Budget

Assessment method decided but not specific budget yet. Timing question: when will School budget be decided and presented by the Superintendent. School Committee vote. Other towns vote. What dates to ask M. Morris to attend Council meetings?

March 26 Finance meeting on regional school. Sean Mangano might be able to present.

Council voted to schedule an additional Council meeting. We may not need to use the meeting if we are able to schedule a joint meeting with Finance. Encourage the Council to attend the public hearing and forum

April 2: Public Hearing on the school budget. May want to post as both. Finance Committee with Town Council. Finance presiding. Rescheduled to April 4, 6:30 PM

April 9: discussion only if questions raised during the meeting. Make Regional Budget recommendation. Do we encourage people to come on the 9th on the topic? Andy will Email Dave Murphy to understand how Northampton conducts these hearings? How often does Superintendent attend?

For Regional School Budget: Post as both Finance with TC attending? Need to confirm.

April 23 meeting as possible joint meeting Finance and Council

3. Review Finance Committee meeting schedule and work plan for remainder of 2019

The Committee reviewed the schedule and materials needed for each. Agreed to have some of the events posted as joint meetings with the Council. Will continue schedule discussion next meeting.

4. Questions on budget information materials and discussion of committee learning needs

Group agreed have sufficient information and background materials. Will review budget details.

5. Public comment: None

6. Minutes of previous meeting: Draft done not yet reviewed.

7. Matters not anticipated by the Chair 48 hours before the meeting: NONE

Town Council charge review requested at Town Council.

The primary issue to be reviewed relates to appointment of non-voting residents to the Finance Committee. Charge lists 4 non-voting residents and 1-year terms. Issues to be reviewed include:

- Longer term for non-residents: at least two-years. For continuity and knowledge
- Appointment starting date July 1, 2019
- Interviews and selection process: Consider having the Finance Committee Chair or Chair designee do the interviews and Finance committee review the people in the pool. Would use the interview process being developed by the OCA committee. Finance would then make recommendations to full Council.
- Term issue: Ad Hoc rules recommends should be at least two-year terms. Potential to be appointed to start July 1, 2019, next fiscal year.

Schoen noted that Finance Committee in the past had 3-year staggered terms. Potential to consider two- and three- year terms to start: This would be valuable for the Town for continuity. Select based on experience and expertise – value added to the Committee. Finance is the only Council committee with this configuration – non-voting resident members. Discussion to continue at next meetings for recommendation of change in Charge and interview/appointment process for Finance Committee non-voting members to the Council.

Adjourned at 3:25 PM

Respectfully submitted: Cathy Schoen