

TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING Minutes April 30, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 2:02 on Tuesday April 30, 2019

Members Present: Steinberg, Schoen, Pam, Bahl-Milne, Griesemer
Members Absent: None

Staff present: Sonia Aldrich
Others present: None

1. Method of appointing community members to the Finance Committee.

The Committee reviewed the draft qualification and interview questions as revised from the previous meeting. The Committee agreed to add "Have you attended any meetings or watched any tapes of Finance meetings?" to interview questions and made other minor revisions.

Committee also agreed to look for a mix of experience, skills, and perspectives to make qualifications more inclusive.

Schoen revised the draft during the meeting and shared. Applicants will be able to see the questions in advance of interviews.

Members also revisited the issue of interviews and recommendations- whether to have OCA or Finance be the interviewing and recommendation body.

A motion made and unanimously accepted (5 to 0) that the chair of the Finance Committee or his/her designee would do the interviews. And that the Finance Committee would see all community activity forms (CAFs) following the process set out by OCA. This process has CAFs reviewed by each member but not discussed in an open meeting. Finance would then make its recommendation for to the full Council.

OCA is scheduled to explain the process and rationale to the Council.

Once the Council decides on whether Finance or OCA will conduct the screening and make recommendations, the interview will proceed. It is not clear whether Finance will see all applicant CAF if OCA conducts the interviews and makes the recommendations.

The goal is to have the three resident members of the Committee appointed to start in July.

2. Goals and Timeline

The Committee review the draft Goals for the section related to Finance, focusing on year 1, and year 1 and beyond goals. Griesemer clarified that the Finance committee does not “approve” but “recommends” goals to the entire council.

The committee review revised “ongoing,” 3rd goal to “and budget amendments.” This would make it clear that the work is year-round.

The purpose of the Goals document and worksheet is to guide and provide time lines. The assigned committee is the starting place, not the only members of the council that will work on specific goals. Start by filling in activities on the time line.

3. Regional School Assessment Method

The committee discussed that despite agreement at Four Towns Meeting, one town may vote against the chosen assessment method. If this occurs, it would require Amherst to either spend more (statutory method) or go back to the negotiations. If challenged, the assessment method could revert to the State Statutory method that calls for a higher appropriation from Amherst.

Steinberg made the Motion and Schoen seconded it as follows:

“The Town of Amherst, in consideration of its fiscal position, will not be able to approve additional funds to the allocation for regional schools for FY20 if the assessment method is changed.”

Passed unanimously, 5 to 0.

Amherst will know the resolution to this issue over the weekend – after the Shutesbury vote on Saturday, May 4.

4. Schedule

The budget will be released on May 1st. In order to discuss and review the budget, Finance will have a series of meetings with departments, schools,

Library, and others in May. Two meetings a week are scheduled – each for 3 hours.

The budget will be presented at Monday's Town Council meeting and then referred to the Finance Committee. Finance is required to make its recommendations to the Council by May 30th.

There is a public hearing scheduled for May 9, 2019 and a public forum on capital scheduled for June 10. Both events will take public comments and questions, as will Council meetings.

A study of Crocker elementary school space for possible expansion has been included in the capital budget. This will help inform the elementary school decisions in advance of a MSBA grant. The study along with the space study of the middle school, for possible placement of the 6th grade, will be instructive for a feasibility study for a new school.

Schoen suggested that in June we, or a subcommittee, revisit the Interactive Budget Tool. Steinberg noted that the Whole Council must eventually be involved because we are still testing the Tool.

Griesemer noted that Finance will need to be ready by May 30th with a budget recommendation for the Whole Council. If meetings are needed on May 28 and 30, Shalini said she would need to participate remotely for both and Cathy said she would not be able to participate on May 30, she has a prior all day commitment.

Minutes: Schoen reported that Finance is caught up with minutes. Final, approved minutes through beginning of April have been uploaded to SharePoint and Sonia is posting. This does not include April 23.

5. Public comments – None.

6. **Next Meeting May 7:** the beginning of budget/department review. The full schedule has been posted.

The Meeting adjourned at 3:30.

Documents reviewed at the meeting:

Draft qualifications and questions for resident members of Finance
Goals and Goals worksheet



Finance Committee meeting timeline

Minutes prepared by Cathy Schoen using initial draft by Dorothy Pam