



**Finance Committee Meeting
December 17, 2019 at 2:30 p.m.
Town Room, Amherst Town Hall
Minutes**

Complete video is available online: <https://amherstmedia.org/content/amherst-finance-committee-december-17-2019>

1. Call to order and declaration of a quorum

Chair Steinberg declared the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 2:40 p.m.

Committee Members present: Andrew Steinberg, Chair; Cathy Schoen, Vice Chair; Lynn Griesemer; Dorothy Pam; Shalini Bahl-Milne; Robert Hegner (non-voting resident); and Sharon Povinelli (non-voting resident)

Committee members absent: Marylou Theilman (non-voting resident).

Others present: Sonia Aldrich, Town Comptroller, and William Kaizen, Chair Public Art Commission. Minutes taken by Martha Marteney.

2. Meeting schedule for 2020

Schoen will be distributing the tentative meeting schedule for 2020. Steinberg reviewed the January dates; Bahl-Milne will not be available for most of the month.

3. Financial implications of proposed Percent for Arts Bylaw, Revised by Ad Hoc Committee

Steinberg invited Schoen to lead this conversation. Schoen explained that she was chair of the ad hoc committee on percent for art. She presented the original and proposed revised Bylaw, highlighting major changes in the revised version. She noted William Kaizen, Chair Public Art Commission was in the audience, who was also a part of this project. The revision at the outset emphasizes the importance of economic vitality created by the art. The revised bylaw increases the threshold for eligible projects from \$100,000 to \$1 million. The intention is that this would be paid off by debt (bonds), over time to spread the cost of the project. A new section also includes a clause that allows the Town Council to reduce the percent for art or delete on specific projects in the event of an economic emergency. The percent for art would apply only to the General Fund share of major capital projects. It would thus exclude the grant share or Enterprise Funds.

Schoen commented that the original Bylaw author, Eric Brody, participated during Ad Hoc committee discussions as the bylaw was revised, and that he indicated support of the proposed changes.

Povinelli questioned the funding of the maintenance of the art, and also asked for clarification of what would constitute an economic crunch. Schoen responded that maintenance would be paid similarly to other maintenance costs by the Town, there would be no separate earmarked funds for the public art projects. She also observed that debt would be very low in terms of adding costs on an annual basis – but

the Council could consider each project in the context of the overall budget. Povinelli's question stemmed for the possible override pending with the current capital projects. Griesemer commented that the Bylaw provides a workable framework while still providing an escape clause if the town finds itself in terrible financial need, such as having to dip into the so-called rainy-day fund. Steinberg, who was also on the ad hoc committee, noted that the Bylaw will only apply to publicly-accessible buildings or those sections of the building that are frequently accessed by the public or even driven by on a regular basis.

Relative to the economic vitality, Bahl-Milne wondered if there is a way to quantify the value of the increased quality of life and the value it brings to town. She supported the revisions as a way of supporting the value of art in the community. Pam noted that there is an overview of the art on the town website. She also encouraged supporting local artists, and that the people in the building support the art being placed there. Schoen responded that she would anticipate the Art Commission to consider these points.

Schoen invited Kaizen to address these last points. He expressed appreciation to the Department of Public works for their efforts on certain maintenance projects. While local artists would certainly be considered, the Arts Commission also wants to ensure that the art is of the highest quality and could even be considered as a major piece on the national level or international, which could then be seen as a draw to the town. Povinelli commented that this could be an advantage to businesses in town by drawing people to Amherst.

Steinberg asked Schoen to summarize the Finance Committee's comments and to draft a report for the Committee, which the committee will then vote on at a later meeting.

4. Review and comment on Finance Committee Charge, ad hoc Audit Committee

Steinberg reviewed the charge and asked Pam for feedback on the work needed thus far. She did not feel that the workload would be burdensome. Griesemer did not believe there was a unilateral requirement to have members of the Finance committee on the ad hoc Audit committee, nor is there something to prohibit that. Aldrich added that there has not been a clear need in the past to have representatives from the library or school. Griesemer said she would verify her recollection that the Town charter does not require such representation.

Steinberg opened the floor to a motion. Schoen made the motion to fold the Audit committee into Finance; Bahl-Milne seconded. Hegner said he would be willing to take on that charge. Motion approved unanimously.

Steinberg will relay this decision to the Governance, Organization, and Legislation (GOL) Committee, as GOL is in the process of reviewing committee charges.

Aldrich noted that the audit review will likely not start until earliest February. This year's focus is the Senior Center and the departments on the second floor of the Town Hall.

It was noted that the Town will need to go out to bid for a new actuary. It was unclear whether that task falls to the Finance Committee or the Town Manager.

5. Financial Indicators

Schoen asked to come back to this issue at the January 6 meeting, especially on the pending budget for the school, based on the fixed increases the school will be facing (salary and health insurance increases.)

Aldrich and Kaizen left the meeting at 3:43

6. Proposed Amherst Affordable Housing Priorities Policy

Steinberg overviewed issues previously discussed about having an affordable housing policy, including among others available financing and the associated cost of town staff time in implementing such a policy. Pam noted that the Zoning sub-committee has been seeking to address these issues, as well as means to address those working residents who might not be able to afford home as well as people who are homeless. Griesemer expressed concern that any identifiable group would feel entitled to certain Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding, which might lead to less than desirable building projects. Schoen noted that this dialog has been enhanced by the work by the Community Resources Committee. The Habitat for Humanity housing was specifically noted as beneficial projects. Pam suggested having someone from the Town or a developer to explain the variances in costs of the affordable housing available now in the town.

Steinberg offered to draft an overview of the documents and to ask Nate Buddington, Chair of the Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC), to address the committee's questions.

7. Capital Investment Projects

Griesemer noted the online feedback on the Listening Sessions is open through December 20, after which time the consultants will summarize the feedback from the meetings and those received online.

8. Adjourn at 4:05

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented

4townFY21(12.10.19)

Affordable Housing-Town Support.V2[7767]

Amherst Housing Policy-July 19, 2019[7345]

Article 28 Rev. 4-25-17

Article 28 Rev. 4-25-17 final original 2019-12-08 18_35_13

Finance Committee Charge FINAL revised 04-22-2019

FTE-info FY21

Housing Policy – TC Finance Committee questions [7.3.19]

Housing policy discussion 10.22.19

Min. Contribution Figures 12.10.19

Percent for Art Ad Hoc Committee report 12.3.1019

Percent for Art Bylaw Revised 11-19-19_Final

ToA-Building Permits 2013-17.