

Finance Committee
Minutes
June 17, 2009

Location: Amherst Regional Middle School Band Room

Attendance: Brian Morton, (Chair), Kay Moran, Douglas Slaughter, Andrew Steinberg, Bob Saul
(at 7:10 pm)

Others present: John Musante (Assistant Town Manager and Finance Director)

Agenda:

1. Position on amendments to the budget presented during a Town Meeting Session
2. Article 23 – Human Services budget
3. Article 28 – 79 S. Pleasant St.
4. Article 13 – Gas Tax
5. Other business

Actions:

Motion by Moran, seconded by Slaughter: The Finance Committee will support its recommendation and oppose any amendment to it that has not been presented to the Committee for discussion prior to the Town Meeting Session where it will be considered. The motion passed with 4 in favor, 0 opposed, 3 members absent.

Motion by Steinberg, seconded by Moran: The Finance Committee will move to dismiss Article 23 or support dismissal if so moved by another individual, board, or committee. The motion passed with 4 in favor, 0 opposed, 3 members absent.

Motion by Steinberg, seconded by Slaughter: The Finance Committee will move to dismiss Article 28 or support dismissal if so moved by another individual, board, or committee. The motion passed with 4 in favor, 0 opposed, 3 members absent.

Motion by Moran, seconded by Slaughter: The Finance Committee will take no position on Article 13 but authorizes the speaker for the committee to make a statement about the importance of Chapter 90 funds to the maintenance of our roads and the decrease in the amount and the value of those funds. The motion passed with 4 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention, 2 members absent.

Discussion:

The meeting convened at 6:50 pm., prior to a session of the Annual Town Meeting. Morton asked whether the committee wished to take positions as motions were offered to amend budgets that were previously adopted and presented by the committee. The committee recognized that it would not have the opportunity to discuss these motions, most of which could have unintended consequences. The committee went through a careful process to develop budgets in consultation with elected boards and with appropriate staff. Moran offered the first motion reported under Committee Actions.

Musante confirmed that the petitioner had been informed about the meeting and the committee's intention to discuss and, if appropriate, take positions on Articles 23, 28, and 13 of the Annual Town Meeting. The petitioner was not present.

Steinberg began the discussion about Article 23 by proposing that the committee move to dismiss because a budget for any department should be considered with the motion for the relevant government function, in this case community services. It is not sound procedure to have a discussion and consideration under a separate article. Morton added that this process effectively provides a "second bite at the apple." Steinberg offered the second motion reported under Committee Actions.

Morton proposed that the committee move to dismiss Article 28, relating to 79 S. Pleasant Street. The proposal is replete with problems that are not answered. Slaughter said that this motion would not foster a good relationship with Amherst College as we seek a continued relationship and financial support from the College for town services. Steinberg pointed to unanswered legal questions about the proposed taking of property by eminent domain. Moran offered the third motion reported under Committee Actions.

The committee has not seen the final motion to be offered under Article 13. Morton recognized that Chapter 90 has been an important source of funds to maintain town roads that has diminished in amount and what it could accomplish during the years of his membership on the committee. Steinberg suggested that the committee could take no position, which is appropriate since it has not seen the final motion nor heard from the petitioner about the motion, but inform Town Meeting about the points Morton made about Chapter 90 funds. Moran offered the fourth motion reported under Committee Actions.

Moran asked whether the committee needed to discuss the most recent list of municipal budget cuts sent by Musante earlier in the day. Musante responded that it was informational only.

Moran moved to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Andrew Steinberg, Acting Secretary