

AMHERST FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES  
Meeting of March 24, 2011 at 7:05 pm  
First Floor Meeting Room of Town Hall

**ATTENDANCE:**

Phil Jackson (7:45pm), Kay Moran (Vice-Chair), Janice Ratner, Bob Saul, Andrew Steinberg (Chair), Marylou Theilman

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Sandy Pooler, Finance Director; Jonathan Tucker, Amherst Planning Dept.; Fred VanDerbeck, Pelham Finance Committee; Walter Wolnik, Resident; and Amherst Media

**AGENDA:**

1. News affecting budget
2. Fiscal Year 2012 budget development
  - a. Debt Service
  - b. Other expenditures and assessments
  - c. Municipal Budget Update
  - d. Budget process and development calendar
3. Non-Financial and Petition Articles
  - a. Zoning, Planning and related petition articles
  - b. Other articles as time permits
4. Member reports – liaisons and committees
5. Minutes of previous meetings
6. Next Meeting and Agenda

**ANNOUNCEMENT:**

Steinberg announced that the Select Board has not signed the Warrant, however the list distributed will guide tonight's discussion. (See Item #1)

**ACTIONS:**

Article \_\_ Residential Parking Requirements - No position - Moved by Moran, Second by Saul, Vote: 5 yes, 0 no, 2 absent

Article \_\_ Watershed Protection (WP) District Lot Coverage - Recommend - Moved by Moran, Second by Theilman, Vote: 5 yes, 0 no, 2 absent

Article \_\_ Permit Submission Requirements – No Position - Moved by Moran, Second by Theilman, Vote: 5 yes, 0 no, 2 absent

FY12 General Fund Debt Schedule – Moved to recommend \$1,890,852 for General Fund Debt Services. Debt Services to be funded as follows: Taxation \$1,670,157, CPA \$175,851, and Wildwood Roof \$44,844. – Moved by Moran, Second Saul, Vote: 6 yes, 0 no, 1 absent

Motion to preliminarily support the allocation of the first \$690,000 of local aid above the November projection as discussed by the Budget Coordinating Group (BCG). Any additional state aid above the amount should be used for capital at 6.25% of the operating budget as recommended by the Joint Capital Planning Committee (JCPC) and any remaining aid to reserves. Moved by Saul, Second by Jackson, Vote: 6 yes, 0 no, 1 absent.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### Non-Financial and Petition Articles

#### Zoning, Planning and Related Petition Articles (See Item #1)

Tucker presented the Zoning and Bylaw Articles. Numbers 27 and 28 will not appear on the Warrant. There are two planning articles that deal with the health and safety of neighborhoods and only would apply to units coming on line after the Articles are approved by Town Meeting. Grandfathering of any units would apply only to units that are legal at the time.

Number 29, Duplexes (PB), is the first of the two Articles (Item #2). Currently there is only one use listed in this bylaw which allows duplexes by right. A number of single family homes are being converted into duplexes which allow more student renters in what were single family homes without the owner on site. The change in the bylaw would set up two classes of duplexes. Class #1 would continue to be by right but would require that one of the duplex be owner occupied which would provide for better management and maintenance. Class #2 would allow non resident duplexes by special permit in general residence and village centers, which would make it consistent with the use definition category. Duplexes are assessed at a higher rate. The cost to the town would be in terms of complaints and enforcement.

Number 30, Residential Parking Requirements (PB) (Item #3) is the second Article related to health and safety of neighbors. It will be presented in two parts: one in the spring and one in the fall. Part one will reduce required parking spaces for multiple and mixed rental units from two to a minimum of one. Parking areas will be on a paved surface, lighted, and the spaces delineated. Any financial impact will be on the owners and not the town. (Vote to take no position because there is no financial impact on the Town.)

Number 31, the Watershed Protection (WP) Lot Coverage (PB) (Item #4) Article is in response to the state which requires protection of watersheds. The town is applying for a permit for the watershed in Shutesbury and will paraphrase the existing state language into the town bylaws to be in compliance. The change will not materially change the properties presently on the watershed. (Vote to recommend to come into compliance with state law.)

Number 32, the Permit Submission Requirement Article (Item #5) makes the zoning bylaw referring to the site plan review application consistent with the requirements in the Planning Board's Rules and Regulations. (Vote to take no position.)

Number 33, the Filling of Land Permitting Article was presented without a handout. This is an amendment to the process when a Special Permit is required to fill land as part of development. The Amendment would allow one body rather than more than one, to grant a permit for a subdivision or development and the filling of land, thus eliminating the need to apply for two permits and the requirement for two hearings. No public hearing has been held on this amendment.

Number 34, the Accessory Livestock or Poultry Article is by petition and would address the keeping of small livestock and chickens in one's yard in residential areas. Present zoning only allows this in outlying and low density areas. The proposed amendment to the Zoning would allow livestock and chickens in more districts. This will not be on the Warrant as the Planning Board decided that it would not propose its own bylaw, but is considering whether to propose amendments to the petitioners' article at Town Meeting.

Numbers 37 (Planning Board, Item #7) and (Petition, Item #8) would amend the Animal Welfare Bylaw to regulate the raising and keeping of livestock or poultry in residential districts with guidelines for numbers, registration, inspections, fees, etc. The animal welfare officer would be in charge of enforcement and paid by the state. The petitioners were not notified of this meeting and will be informed of the meeting in two weeks.

#### Debt Service

Pooler presented Number 10f, Debt Service (Item #9) which is an obligation the town has to pay in the appropriate amount. The total appropriation to pay in FY12 is \$1,890,852. Money listed for the Plum Brook Recreation Fields is a placeholder as the Community Preservation Act (CPA) committee may go out for permanent financing. The town is trying to sell the never used portable classrooms, a capital item, purchased for the schools and which are located behind Mark's Meadow School. (Vote to recommend \$1,890,852 for debt service from appropriate categories.)

#### Other Expenditures and Assessments

Pooler reported that items 4 a, c, and d on the tentative town warrant (Item #1) will not be on the Warrant. Item 4c will allow someone else to work off a certain amount of a person's taxes if unable to do so him/herself.

#### News Affecting Budget

There is no news affecting the budget and no information as to whether the amount of state aid will be higher or lower than the Governor's budget.

#### Member Reports

Steinberg distributed the latest Summary Points from the BCG (Item #10) which shows the distribution of \$690,000 which is in excess of the Finance Committee's projection of the worst case scenario last fall. Under the BCG distribution, the money would be distributed as follows: Elementary Schools, \$300,000; Town, \$200,000; Library, \$40,000; Capital \$150,000. After some discussion about the distribution and how additional money would be allocated beyond the \$690,000, if that were to happen, the Finance Committee passed the motion set forth above.

Further discussion included a variety of points some of which were: using reserves, growing the reserves, adding money for capital items, taxing to the levy limit, running down the capital budget, preparing for future budgets, etc.

#### Budget Process and Development Calendar

By April 15 the state House Ways and Means Committee should have its preliminary budget available which will influence what the Finance Committee will recommend. Due to the short timeline, the Finance Committee will mail a preliminary report to Town Meeting followed by a second mailing which will include the budget and its recommendations.

It is anticipated that all other articles, with written comments, will be done by April 14 and all work completed by April 21.

#### **NEXT MEETING AND AGENDA:**

The next meeting is Thursday March 31, 2011.

Agenda items include:

Warrant Article not covered  
Capital Program/Requests  
CPEC  
Dept. of Public Works  
Conservation Commission

**ADJOURNED:**

The meeting adjourned at 9:35pm.

Submitted by:

Marylou Theilman, Acting Clerk

**ITEMS DISTRIBUTED AT THE MEETING:**

Item #1 2011 Annual Town Meeting (Tentative Warrant Items), Finance Committee 3/24/2011

Item #2 Draft Article \_\_ Duplexes, Amherst Planning Department – JT 3/17/2011

Item # 3 Draft Article \_\_ Residential Parking Requirements (Zoning Bylaw Amendment –  
Planning Board), Amherst Planning Department – JT 3/16/2011

Item #4 Draft Article \_\_ Zoning Bylaw – Watershed Protection (WP) District Lot Coverage  
{[Planning Board), Amherst Planning Department – JT 2/9/2011

Item #5 Draft Article \_\_ Permit Submission Requirements, Amherst Planning  
Department – JT 11/22/2010

Item #6 Zoning Warrant Article Petition, Accessory Livestock or Poultry 2/3/2011

Item #7 Draft Article \_\_ General Bylaws amendment – Registration of Certain Livestock or Poultry  
(Planning Board)

Item #8 Petition Article, General Bylaws amendment – Registration of Certain Livestock or Poultry

Item #9 Town of Amherst FY12 General Fund Debt Schedule

Item #10 Amherst Budget Coordinating Group, Summary Points – March 17, 2011