

AMHERST FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Meeting of August 29, 2007

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the First Floor Meeting Room of Town Hall.

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Marilyn Blaustein, Paul Bobrowski, Alice Carlozzi (Chair), Kay Moran, Brian Morton (Vice Chair), Andrew Steinberg. (Slaughter absent).

STAFF AND OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

John Musante, Finance Director/Treasurer; Baer Tierkel, Town Meeting member.

AGENDA

1. Reorganization
 2. Financial Policies and Budget Process
 3. Process and calendar for issuing FY 09 budget guidelines
 4. Providing additional info to Town Meeting
 5. Review Town Report Draft
 6. Minutes of April 5, May 21, July 11, 2007
 7. Member Reports
 8. Next Meeting and Agenda
 9. Misc
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1. Reorganization
 - a. Chair/Vice-Chair: Musante presided while the committee elected a new Chair. Steinberg nominated Morton as Chair, seconded by Moran. VOTED 6-0-0 (1 absent). Morton now presiding. Blaustein nominated Moran as Vice-Chair, seconded by Carlozzi. Moran nominated Steinberg, seconded by Morton. After amicable discussion, Steinberg declined nomination. VOTED 5-0-1 (Moran), (1 absent).
 - b. Minutes: It was agreed that minutes would be kept on a rotating basis, Bobrowski to manage.
 - c. Sub-committee assignments:
 - i. JCPC: Moran and Bobrowski
 - ii. BCG: Morton and Steinberg
 - iii. Regional Schools: Carlozzi
 - iv. Elementary Schools: Steinberg, tentatively
 - v. Library: Moran
 - vi. Select Board: Morton (primary), with rest of committee to cover Morton's fall scheduling conflicts
 - vii. Comprehensive Planning: Blaustein
 - viii. Audit Committee: Morton; meets twice per year; reviews auditor's report, which includes criticism, suggestions for future improvements, internal controls, etc.
 - d. Slaughter arrives (7:33 p)
 - e. Financial Spreadsheet maintained by Morton: will continue as is, Morton happy to train a backup
 2. Financial Policies and Budget Process

- a. Musante characterized FinCom role as primary during analysis phase of process, with BCG as the lead during the mobilization phase. Musante noted that the town currently has snippets of financial guidelines and policies. During this cycle, the goal should be to arrive at a “soup to nuts” version, with common-sense goals and policies, covering subjects such as:
 - i. A calendar
 - ii. Revenues and expenses
 - iii. Capital
 - iv. Debt
 - v. Reserves
 - b. This all should perhaps come forward in memo form, Musante proposing to create the first draft.
 - c. Discussion ensued around the proper role of FinCom, how to circulate, how to reach consensus in the town, and possible ratification by Town Meeting.
 - d. Conclusion:
 - i. There would be a draft, discussion and feedback, with the ultimate goal of producing a FinCom document. Unclear if this will be presented to Town Meeting.
 - ii. Elements of Document
 - 1. Reserves
 - a. Minimum level
 - i. E.g. 8% reserves by FY10
 - 2. Capital
 - 3. Debt
 - a. Acceptable level
 - 4. Revenues
 - a. Local receipts
 - b. Fees, and how assigned
 - 5. Best Practices
3. Process and Calendar
 - a. Musante reported that the Town Manager wanted an earlier start date for the budget process (Oct.); Musante will put out a draft of a proposed process after the joint projections meeting
4. Additional Information For Town Meeting
 - a. Tierkel discussed with the committee ways to better present the budget, so that Town Meeting could see a better allocation of costs in their respective functional areas; ideas were floated, such as:
 - i. Update the Town Manager budget closer to Town Meeting
 - ii. Eliminate the 5 functional areas of Municipal Government
 - iii. Move General Government to the end of town meeting warrant
 - b. Conclusion: FinCom will continue to discuss these and other options to make the budget process at Town Meeting more transparent without bogging down the process
5. Draft of Town Report
 - a. The committee reviewed the draft, with some suggestion for the “Thanks” section; VOTED 6-0-0 (1 absent, Moran) to support, with final revisions to be made by Carlozzi.
6. Minutes
 - a. April 5: VOTED 6-0-0 (1 absent, Blaustein), minor amendments
 - b. May 31: VOTED 7-0, minor amendments

- c. July 11: VOTED 6-0-1 (Bobrowski), minor amendments
- 7. Member Reports
 - a. Region: Carlozzi reported that on 8/27 the region expressed interest in another joint Committee to discuss E&D account limits, and whether elementary transportation costs should be allocated to the towns or the region. This issue is on a fast track, as DOE is unhappy with current method. Any changes would go to the region for a vote.
 - b. Comprehensive Planning: Blaustein reported that a draft master plan is on the web, and that a public meeting will be held on 9/27, entitled “Highlights of the Plan”; there is also debate regarding whether or not each element of a plan must go to Town Meeting for approval
 - c. BCG: Musante reported that an outside facilitator may be a possibility
 - d. Steinberg reported that the Select Board is considering a 4-Town regional meeting to flesh out a calendar, the meeting to occur sometime in September.
- 8. Next meeting and Agenda
 - a. Musante will try to provide:
 - i. FY 07 year-end results
 - ii. Draft financial policy guidelines
 - iii. Preliminary list of fall Town Meeting items
 - iv. Town Manager agreement with UMass
 - b. Next meeting: 9/13, Blaustein, Steinberg to be absent
- 9. Misc
 - a. Musante reported that traffic-calming measures would cost \$7985.00; this amount is unbudgeted; it would be up to FinCom to decide whether or not to use the Reserve Fund to pay for this.
 - b. The committee recognized Alice Carlozzi for her long (12 years) and dedicated service as Chair of the committee; the committee members expressed their thanks and presented her with a gift.

Voted unanimously to adjourn at 10:11 p.m.

Submitted by Paul Bobrowski, Acting Clerk

Approved 9/13/2007