

**AMHERST FINANCE COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

Meeting of November 1, 2012  
Bangs Center

**Attendance:**

Andrew Steinberg (Chair), Kay Moran (Vice-Chair), Janice Ratner, Anurag Sharma, Douglas Slaughter, Marylou Theilman. Absent: Bob Saul

**Others Present:**

Sandy Pooler, Finance Director; Rob Crowner, Planning Board, Vince O'Connor, Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director, Melissa Perot, Maurine Adams, Charles Hopkins

Ben Grosscup and Vince O'Connor, Town Meeting members; Jonathan O'Keeffe, chair, Zoning Subcommittee of the Planning Board; Amherst Media.

Call to Order: 7:15

Steinberg clarified that the responsibility of the FC is all that relates to the financial impact on the town. If a particular article has no financial impact, then we take no position. If there is deemed to be financial impact, then we make a recommendation to the town meeting.

Petitioners Perot and Adams led a discussion about their petition Article 19, amending the Nuisance House Bylaw to require the town to charge response costs to landlords. Some of the discussion was about the difficulty in allocating the policing and fire response costs by activity, and hence the difficulty in determining the right amount to fine for violations. Discussions were ongoing with the Chief of Police and the Town Manager.

Pooler indicated that it may be appropriate to refer to the select board; in the meantime administrative issues could move forward and prepare to bring it to spring TM. Theilman raised a process question: how long before the ByLaw changes take effect? Pooler responded that would be couple of months, although the administrative changes related to rental permitting could be done without the ByLaw changes.

More discussion ensued regarding the abuse and policing costs. Adams referred to Professor Karlstrom's study, referring to the part where frequent calls were shown to be made to the same addresses, which were non-owner-occupied houses. As part of ongoing research by the neighbors, more data were being collected to correlate calls with houses.

O'Conner noted that the ByLaw had been in effect for three years, and sought to make both the managers as well as owners responsible. He made a plea to take action quickly as the situation appeared to be deteriorating, with more calls during the last two months than in the last three years. At some point, he argued, the town's money (for overtime or weekend) being spent needs to be recouped.

Steinberg brought the discussion back into focus by saying that we need to stick with the financial impact. The difficulty the police have in quantifying the actual cost of intervention could create grounds for lawsuits and increase the legal costs for the town.

The petitioners (Adams) responded that they did not stipulate what the response costs would be, but were ready for town to specify who was to be responsible for sending out the notices.

Moran moved to defer any action to the Town Meeting. Is there a discernible financial impact on the town? We don't know what the motion on this article going to be yet, she argued.

Moran Motion passed: 7-0.

Article 16

Adam noted that if article 13 passed then they could withdraw article 16. If article 13 did not pass, then they'd argue article 16.

Moran moved that we make no recommendation on this one. Second from Theilman.

Vote: 6-0, 1 absent (Saul)

Article 17:

No finance committee implications here.

Moran moved and Theilman second to make no recommendations: Vote 6-0, 1 absent (Saul)

Crowner noted that articles 12-15 and article 11 were related to definitional issues. The purpose of these articles, he noted, was to change how single and two-family homes were regulated. Changes were in two classes: Owner-occupied by right and duplexes by site plan review. Non-owner-occupied by special permit. Need to define what was conversion project and was constituted duplexes. These changes would not have financial impact for the town. The issue was quality of life for townspeople but not financial impact.

Moran made the motion that we have no recommendation for Articles 11-15. Second by Slaughter.

Steinberg saw financial impact in reduced costs because of enforcement and oversight. He oppose the motion.

Vote: 5-1, 1 absent (Saul)

Article 10:

Theilman moved that we take no position on this article. Ratner second

Discussion none

Vote: 6-0, 1 absent (Saul)



Draft of Finance Committee Guidelines from Steinberg

Theilman - would like to see a process where we have our questions submitted to the departments so that they can bring answers to our meeting so that we don't have to raise the questions during meeting and be told that they'll get that to us.

Motion by Theilman to adopt the guidelines. Second by Ratner.

Vote: 6-0-1 absent (Saul)

### **Liaison reports**

Ratner, Library...meeting Tuesday Nov 1 election day. Volumes of information. Budget committee meeting Nov 19.

Steinberg updated on the association of town finance committees

### **Previous minutes**

October 11, 2012 Ratner. No discussion.

Moran moved to accept the minutes. Second by Slaughter

Vote 5-0-1 absention (Theilman) and 1 absent (Saul)

Adjourned 10:27 pm

Anurag Sharma, Acting clerk

DOCUMENTS USED AT THE MEETING.

Warrant for Special Town Meeting of Nov. 19, 2013