

Approved April 30, 2014
Amherst Finance Committee Minutes
Thursday, April 24, 2014
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

Attendance: Kay Moran (Chair), Anurag Sharma (7:20p.m.), Marylou Theilman (Vice Chair), Janice Ratner, Douglas Slaughter. Absent: Sarah Swartz

Others attending: Sandy Pooler, Amherst Finance Director; Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director; Vincent O'Connor, Town Meeting Article Petitioner; Amherst Media

Annual Town Meeting Zoning Articles 26, 28:

Article 26, Zoning—Small House Development is being deferred by the Planning Board for further revision. The Finance Committee (FC) voted
TO RECOMMEND REFERRAL to the Planning Board: VOTED 5-0,1 Absent

Article 28, Zoning---Supplemental Dwelling Units was presented by Tucker, who explained that the new zoning would create three categories for supplemental dwelling units and be overseen by the Building Commissioner rather than the present zoning, which has only one category requiring a Special Permit. The new zoning has the potential to increase modest priced housing and increase property taxes.

The FC voted **TO RECOMMEND: VOTED 5-0, 1 Absent**

Write-up by Sharma

Petition Articles 37-38, 40-42:

Article 37---Community Preservation Act ---O'Connor advised the FC that the words "*and insofar as the laws of the Commonwealth may allow, dedicate the funds derived from said surcharge increase, including any corresponding increase in state matching funds to the preservation, production and acquisition of Chapter 40B countable housing for families and individuals,*" will be deleted. The intent of the Article is to place the increase in the surcharge before Town voters at the fall election. Matching grant funds are tied to the amount a Town will contribute toward a project, and increasing the surcharge to 3% will provide more money the Town can offer as its share. While the FC supported placing this item on the fall ballot, it did not take a position on any percentage, leaving that up to Town Meeting and the voters. This requires a majority vote of Town Meeting and a majority in the Fall Town-wide vote.

The FC voted **TO RECOMMEND: VOTED 5-0, 1 Absent**

Write-up by Slaughter

Article 38 Dickinson Street---O'Connor explained that it was his intent to keep the property on the tax roll, and that acquiring the property from Amherst College and selling it for private use would keep it taxable. Committee members had concerns about Brown Fields and cleanup. What would be the Town's responsibility for any cleanup? In addition, Eminent Domain was also an issue, as was the price of \$750,000 and probable difficulty of selling it.

The FC voted **NOT TO RECOMMEND: VOTED 5-0, 1 Absent**

Write-up by Slaughter

Article 40---Low Income Tax Credit--- Some members of the FC believe that the Low Income Tax Credit would be costly and ongoing for the Town, unlike the one-time vouchers under the Community Preservation Act (CPA). It also may be complicated to administer. Sharma did not agree that the proposal is without financial merit and stated that it needed to be examined more formally.

The FC voted **NOT TO RECOMMEND: VOTED 4 YES, Sharma NO, 1 Absent**
Write-up by Moran

Article 41---Resolution for Support of House 1167---The discussion focused on whether supporting the Resolution, which would count Section 8 Housing Vouchers toward the Town's Chapter 40B inventory, would increase or decrease the Town's commitment to affordable housing. There was no clear agreement on that issue. In addition, some members believed that moveable Section 8 Housing Vouchers would be difficult to track and would require working with agencies outside the Town. Slaughter stated that he believes there would be a financial impact on the Town and that counting Section 8 Housing Vouchers would decrease the incentive to build new affordable housing. After some discussion the Committee decided not to take a position on the Article.

The FC voted **NO POSITION: VOTED 4 YES, Slaughter NO, 1 Absent**
Write-up by Sharma

Article 42---Rescind Section of the Residential Property By-law---Pooler informed the Committee that there is the Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods Committee, which is active and works with the Building Commissioner. The FC did not believe there is a need to establish another committee and that all concerns could be directed to the present committee.

The FC voted **NOT TO RECOMMEND: VOTED 5-0, 1 Absent**
Write-up by Theilman

Review Articles 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 32:

Article 18---Debt Rescission---This Article is recommended by the FC. However, if Article 17 fails (requires a 2/3 vote), the FC will support dismissal. The FC voted **TO RECOMMEND DISMISSAL IF ARTICLE 17 FAILS : VOTED 5-0, 1 Absent**
No write-up required.

Article 19---Watershed Land Purchase---Although this Article is recommended by the FC, the Select Board is requesting more time to study the issue, as once the Article is approved, the property involved cannot be expanded.

The FC voted **TO RECOMMEND DISMISSAL: VOTED 5-0, 1 Absent**
No write-up required.

Article 20, Part 1 Section A---Community Preservation Act---This is accurate as written.

Article 21---Social Services Funding---This Article is recommended by the FC, as it is a request for a one year appropriation from free cash, and because it has not been built into the budget. However, if any or all of these funds are transferred to Community Services by Town Meeting, the equivalent amount will be reduced and dismissed from this Article. The FC voted

TO RECOMMEND DISMISSAL OF THE EQUIVALENT AMOUNT OF MONEY ADDED TO THE COMMUNITY SERVICES BUDGET: VOTED 5-0, 1 Absent
No write-up required.

Article 24---Zoning---Inclusionary Zoning---The FC recommended the Article, as written in the Finance Committee Report, which is presently under revision by the Planning Board. The revision has been deemed by the Town Moderator to exceed the limits of what would be considered an amendment. A Special Town Meeting will be held June 2 to vote on the major revision. If the Special Town Meeting rejects the new version, the regular session of Town Meeting will take up the original version approved by the FC.

Write-up by Slaughter

Article 32---Acquisition of Easements---No change.

Other Matters contained within FY15 Budget:

The Finance Committee Report to Town Meeting is finished and being mailed to Town Meeting members.

The \$700,000 expense for renovating the East Street School is needed to bring the building into compliance with ADA requirements.

New Information affecting Budget:

None

Member Reports – Liaisons and Committees -- Choose BCG Member:

Moran will serve as the Budget Coordinating Group representative from FC, which has been the role of the Chair of the FC.

Town Meeting Article Speaking Assignments: See below.

Minutes of Previous Meetings:

None

Next Meetings and Agendas:

If meetings are needed to review Town Meeting Articles, dates include: April 30, May 5 and May 7.

Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of Meeting:

None

Materials and Documents used at the Meeting:

Town Warrant

Warrant Article Petition Forms from Mr. O'Connor for Articles 37, 38, 40, 41 and 42

Speaking Assignments for Town Meeting below:

Adjourned

The meeting adjourned at 9:12pm

Submitted by:
Marylou Theilman, Acting Clerk

TOWN MEETING ARTICLE SPEAKING ASSIGNMENTS
(See Finance Committee Report for the Title of the Article and the Committee's Write-up.)

Article	Finance Committee Position	Speaker
Article 1	Recommend	Kay
Article 2	Recommend or Dismiss	Kay
Article 3	Recommend	Marylou
Article 4	Recommend	Kay
Article 5a	Recommend	Janice
Article 5b	Recommend	Janice
Article 6A	Recommend	Kay
Article 6B	Recommend	Kay
Article 6C	Recommend	Kay
Article 6D	Recommend Dismissal	Kay
Article 7 RetireAssess.	Recommend	Doug
Article 8 Lockup	Recommend	Doug
Article 9 OPEB	Recommend	Anurag
Article 10	Recommend	Marylou
Article 11	Recommend	Marylou
Article 12 Com.Serv	Recommend	Sarah
Article 12 Cons&Dev	Recommend	Sarah
Article 12 Gen.Govt.	Recommend	Anurag
Article 12 Debt.Serv.	Recommend	Anurag
Article 12 Pub.Wrks	Recommend	Janice
Article 12 Water	Recommend	Doug
Article 12 Sewer	Recommend	Doug
Article 12 SolidWaste	Recommend	Doug
Article 12 Trans.Fund	Recommend	Doug
Article 12 Pub.Safety	Recommend	Kay
Article 12 Elem.Schls.	Recommend	Marylou
Article 12 Reg.Schls.	Recommend	Marylou
Article 12 Library	Recommend	Janice
Article 13 RserveFund	Recommend	Kay
Article 14	Recommend	Doug
Article 15	Recommend	Doug
Article 16	Recommend	Doug
Article 17	Recommend	Marylou
Article 18	Recommend	Marylou
Article 19	Recommend	Janice
Article 20A	Recommend	Sarah
Article 20A-1 CPAC	Recommend	Sarah
Article 20A-2 CPAC	Recommend	Sarah
Article 20A-3 CPAC	Recommend	Sarah

Article 20A-4 CPAC	Recommend	Sarah
Article 20A-5 CPAC	Recommend	Sarah
Article 20B CPAC	Recommend	Sarah
Article 20C CPAC	Recommend	Sarah
Article 21	Recommend the Article However, if Social Services money is moved to Community Services, FC will vote to dismiss Article 21	Kay
Article 22	Delayed to TM	Kay
Article 23	Delayed to TM	Kay
Article 24	Recommend	Doug
Article 25	Recommend	Doug
Article 26	Recommend Referral to Plan. Board	Marylou
Article 27	Recommend	Janice
Article 28 Sup.Dwell.	Recommend	Anurag
Article 29	No Recommendation/ Position	Kay
Article 30	No Recommendation/Position	Kay
Article 31	Recommend	Doug
Article 32	Recommend	Janice
Article 33	Recommend	Janice
Article 34	Recommend	Janice
Article 35	No Recommendation/Position	Kay
Article 36	Not Recommended	Kay
Article 37	Recommend	Doug
Article 38	Not Recommended	Doug
Article 39	No Recommendation/Position on the Weiss Amendment. Not Recommended on Article 39 as written.	Kay
Article 40	Not Recommended	Kay
Article 41	No Recommendation/Position	Anurag
Article 42	Not Recommended	Marylou

Final Articles needing write-ups, and due to Kay by Wednesday, April 30.

Article 28---Anurag
Article 37---Doug
Article 38---Doug
Article 40---Kay
Article 41---Anurag
Article 42---Marylou