

Approved 10/09/14

**Amherst Finance Committee Minutes
Thursday, April 10, 2014 7:00 PM
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall**

ATTENDANCE:

Kay Moran (Chair), Janice Ratner, Douglas Slaughter, Sarah Swartz, Marylou Theilman (Vice-Chair) Absent: Anurag Sharma

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Sandy Pooler, Finance Director; Nate Malloy, Planning Department; Greg Stutsman, Planning Board (Housing Trust article); Amherst Media

Meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm.

AGENDA AND DISCUSSION

1. Consider Article 12, Elementary Schools budget

The Finance Committee voted 4-0, 1 absent, 1 abstention (Slaughter), to RECOMMEND \$21,490,563 for the Elementary School budget. This amount is different from the amount voted by the School Committee due to changes in state accounting procedures for charter and choice assessments. The actual amount for the school budget remains the same.

2. Consider articles 24-30, zoning

Article 24 - Inclusionary Zoning - The Finance Committee voted 5-0, 1 absent, to RECOMMEND this article. The changes proposed clarify and simplify this Zoning Bylaw, perhaps enhancing the opportunities for affordable housing in Amherst.

Article 25 - Atkins Corner Rezoning - The Finance Committee voted 5-0, 1 absent, to RECOMMEND this article.

Article 26 - Small House Development - Wait on this article.

Article 27 - Accessory Home Business Uses - This would provide clarity, increase revenue from fees and personal property taxes. The Finance Committee voted 5-0, 1 absent, to RECOMMEND this article.

Article 28 - Supplemental Dwelling Units - Wait on this article.

Articles 29 and 30 - Restrictive Covenant on 284 North Pleasant Street - The Finance Committee voted 5-0, 1 absent, to take no position on these articles.

3. Consider petition articles 36-38, 40-42

Article 36 - Petition -Drones - The Finance Committee voted 5-0, 1 absent, NOT TO RECOMMEND this article.

4. Other matters contained within FY15 budget

Article 34 - Establishment of Municipal Affordable Housing Trust - This type of Trust Fund was discussed. It would provide a local funding source and allow for more flexibility when property becomes available. A Board of Trustees would control the money; further Town Meeting action would not be required. Money would be held by the Town, under the control of the Treasurer, and expenditures would be made through a purchase order/invoice process, similar to other Town expenditures. Money can be invested in a pool. Motion will make the handling of the money (held by the Town) clear. Money can be appropriated directly into the Fund, e.g. CPA funding, paying a

fee as an alternative to inclusionary zoning. The Trust could reimburse the Town for services (staff, accounting department). Ninety communities have adopted Housing Trusts. **The Finance Committee voted 5-0, 1 absent, to RECOMMEND this article.**

Article 39 - Petition -24-30 Gatehouse Road - The Finance Committee voted 5-0, 1 absent, NOT TO RECOMMEND this article as it is currently written. If the motion is different, as the petitioner intends, the recommendation may be changed. No position was taken on the intended motion at this time.

Article 20B - Community Preservation Act - Open Space - Belchertown Road Acquisition - For this, \$150,950 would be appropriated with \$41,785 coming from CPA funds and the rest from a state grant. **The Finance Committee voted 5-0, 1 absent, to RECOMMEND this article** This is an appropriate use of CPA funds.

Article 5 - Jones Library Feasibility Study- The Jones Library Trustees are asking the Town to contribute \$25,000 for this study which the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners would match with a \$50,000 grant for a total of \$75,000. If the grant is not received, the Town contribution will not be spent. **The Finance Committee voted 6-0 to RECOMMEND this article** (from vote on JCPC report).

Plans were made for the remaining articles, both for Finance Committee action and for writing up the Finance Committee Report.

5. New information affecting budget - The House Ways and Means budget which came out on Wednesday includes the same amounts for Ch. 70 and Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA). There is a higher charter school assessment but also a higher reimbursement so we should come out ahead. There is more reimbursement for state owned land and a little increase in library aid. The Region will get \$30,000- \$35,000 more for transportation.

6. Member reports – liaisons and committees - None.

7. Minutes of previous meetings - None.

8. Next Meetings and Agendas - April 24, 2014 with several of the remaining articles on the agenda.

9. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting - None.

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 pm.

Summarized by
Janice Ratner

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