

**Amherst Finance Committee Minutes
Thursday, October 16, 2014 6:30 PM
Town Room, Amherst Town Hall**

ATTENDANCE:

Kay Moran (Chair), Marylou Theilman (Vice Chair), Steve Braun, Janice Ratner, Anurag Sharma, Douglas Slaughter. Absent: Bernie Kubiak,

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Sandy Pooler, Finance Director; John Musante, Town Manager; Maria Geryk, Superintendent of Schools; Sean Mangano, Schools Finance Director; Sharon Sharry, Jones Library Director; several members of the Select Board, Amherst and Regional School Committees, and Jones Library Trustees; Larry Kelley; Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director; Amherst Media

Meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm. Kay Moran and John Musante both welcomed the four boards and committees and those committee members in attendance introduced themselves. This evening's presentation begins the budget development process.

AGENDA (PART I) AND DISCUSSION

1. Meet with the Select Board, School Committee and Library Trustees for presentation of the Town's financial trend monitoring report and preliminary financial projections for FY16.

Sandy Pooler provided two packets, one titled "Financial Trend Monitoring Report, October 2014", a Financial Indicator Analysis for FY2005-FY2014, and the other containing information on the current financial situation and outlook, revenue and expenditure projections for the next three years (FY16-18), and a draft FY16 budget planning calendar. Pooler presented the information contained in these packets.

Based on the assumptions presented, the FY16 budget can be expected to increase 2.9% to maintain level services. This translates to 2.5% increase for the Town budget, 2.2% for the elementary schools, 2.5% for the regional schools, 2.5% for the library, 2.7 % for capital, 7.5% for the retirement assessment, and an additional \$100,000 increase for Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB). Reserves will not need to be used.

AGENDA (PART II) AND DISCUSSION (This agenda started at 7:47 pm)

2. News affecting budget - none other than that in the previous presentation.

3. Discussion of November Special Town Meeting warrant articles - Jonathan Tucker reported that the Planning Board held a public hearing on Articles 4 and 5. (The Planning Board voted 5-0 to recommend Article 4 and voted 4-0, 1 abstaining, to recommend that Article 5 be referred back to the Planning Board). There are two consultants working on inclusionary zoning and a report is expected next week.

Article 4. Zoning Amendment - Special Districts Reorganization - Tucker distributed a handout with information on Article 4. There are numbering changes, updating and corrections of terminology and vestigial errors, and editorial improvements. Lawrence Swamp is deleted from the

Watershed District section but remains in the Aquifer Recharge District section. Protection of the Lawrence Swamp remains unchanged. **The Finance Committee voted to RECOMMEND Article 4, 6-0, 1 absent.** Although the financial impact of the proposed changes is probably minimal, it is expected that clarifying zoning bylaws will result in more efficiency and less litigation. There was a question about the amount of actual litigation related to zoning bylaw issues over the last several years. Tucker will follow up.

Article 5. Petition - Zoning Amendment - Inclusionary Zoning - The discussion of the possibility of litigation with regard to the language in this article continued. Would this article take away developer's rights? Inclusionary zoning is different for different sections of town and thresholds can differ. A 2009 legal opinion recognizes use and not dimensional reasons for special permits with regard to inclusionary zoning. The Finance Committee and most likely Town Meeting would need a more current legal opinion on this matter. **The Finance Committee voted to DEFER a recommendation on Article 5, 5-0, 1 absent, 1 abstention until Town Meeting.**

Article 6. Petition - Certification for Fluoridation of Amherst Town Water - Steve Braun prepared and read a brief report on this article including some of the material discussed previously, such as that supplies are tested and must pass certain quality standards and that levels of contaminants fall below EPA standards. **The Finance Committee voted NOT TO RECOMMEND Article 6, 6-0, 1 absent.**

4. Discussion of financial projections for FY16 and preliminary budget guidelines - Next meeting.

5. Discussion of questions on the Nov. 4 election ballot - Next meeting.

6. Member reports – liaisons and committees - None.

7. Minutes of previous meetings - The minutes of the October 9, 2014 meeting were approved by a vote of 6-0, 1 absent.

8. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the chair 48 hours in advance of meeting - None

Next Meeting and Agenda - The Finance Committee will meet Thursday, October 23, at the Police Station. Agenda items include discussion of the preliminary budget guidelines, warrant articles, and the November 4 election local ballot question.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Janice Ratner, acting clerk

Documents used:

Financial Trend Monitoring Report, October 2014

Packet with agenda and slides used in presentation, October 16, 2014

Article 4. Special Districts Reorganization, Fall 2014 Special Town Meeting,
Amherst Planning Department, October 2014

Town Warrant, November 5, 2014 Special Town Meeting