

Amherst Finance Committee Minutes

April 3, 2014

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. in the First Floor meeting room at Town Hall.

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Kay Moran, Janice Ratner, Anurag Sharma, Doug Slaughter, Sarah Swartz, Marylou Theilman.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: John Musante, Town Manager; Sanford Pooler, Finance Director; Nancy Gregg, Housing and Sheltering Committee Co-Chair; Gerry Weiss; Gregory Bascomb, Human Rights Commission Chair; Guilford Mooring, Superintendent of Public Works

AGENDA AND DISCUSSION

1. Election of chair, vice-chair
 2. Consider articles concerning easements, watershed land purchase, multi-year cell tower agreement, altered rights of way
 3. Consider municipal housing trust article
 4. Consider Right to Organize article
 5. Other matters contained within Town Manager FY15 budget
 6. New information affecting budget
 7. Consider, vote on Town Meeting Articles affecting Fiscal Year 2015 budget
 8. Member reports – liaisons and committees
 9. Minutes of previous meetings
 10. Next Meetings and Agendas
 11. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting
-

1. Election of chair, vice-chair
Pooler called to order the meeting due to the chairman vacating his position upon his election to the Select Board.
The Committee voted 5-0 with 1 abstention to elect Moran chair.
The Committee voted 5-0 with 1 abstention to elect Theilman vice-chair.
2. Consider articles concerning easements, watershed land purchase, multi-year cell tower agreement, altered rights of way

Mooring explained that in order for the Town to reach an agreement with a cell carrier a multi-year cell tower contract was necessary. The cell tower would be located at the Transfer Station with the revenue generated going to the Solid Waste Fund and no costs to the Town. The currently discussed contract would be for 20 years at \$18,000 per year with a 3% per year increase. Other carriers co-locating on the tower would result in the Town receiving 50% of the revenue from the co-location fees.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend Article 31.

Mooring explained that at the intersection of Triangle and East Pleasant Streets the Town was seeking a MassWorks grant to aid in the redesign of the intersection. In order to accomplish the work some takings would be required and by having the authority to acquire the land it would enhance our grant application. He reported that he did not expect to need any money to acquire the land since it is a small amount of land and the project is beneficial to the landowners.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend Article 32.

Mooring explained that the easements on Meetinghouse Road in Pelham were needed so that repairs to two bridges could be made. He stated that the work will have no impact on the watershed and there will be no cost to the Town of Amherst.

The Committee voted 6-0 to take no position on Article 33.

Mooring stated that the Town, supported by the state, often tries to acquire land in the watershed of our water resources when it becomes available for purchase. Article 19 is an attempt to acquire land of this type by utilizing \$350,000 from a state grant program and \$350,000 from the Water Fund. He stated that the acquisition of the land would only occur if the grant was received.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$700,000 be appropriated for the acquisition of land in our drinking water supply watershed with \$350,000 contingent on grant funding and \$350,000 from the Water Fund Surplus as stated in Article 19.

3. Consider municipal housing trust article

Gregg presented a brief history of Municipal Housing Trusts in Massachusetts and Amherst. She stated that it was proposed before but was referred back and was not brought back to Town Meeting before this. She detailed that the Trust would be administered by a Board of Trustees appointed by the Select Board for terms of 2 years, it has 17 powers allowed by law and that the money for funding the trust can come from many sources such as Community Preservation Act funds, inclusionary zoning requirements, etc. Some of the benefits of such a Trust are that it can be used outside of the regular cycle of CPA Committee funding and Town Meeting to achieve and promote Affordable Housing opportunities. This affords more flexibility and quicker action in cases where an opportunity is available off cycle and available for a limited time. Gregg

stated that the Town is financially protected since any debt the Trust incurs is not backed by the Town's full financial weight. She also noted that the Trust is limited to committing 80% of the Trust's value, all meetings are subject to the Open Meeting laws, the Trust reports to the Select Board and it is required to have an annual audit. Pooler asked if the Town will have a role in administering the Trust or is it independent. Gregg replied that it could be either way but that Town Counsel may need to be consulted to clarify the options and limitations.

4. Consider Right to Organize article

Bascomb presented the resolution contained in Article 35 and the rationale behind it. He stated that it takes a positive approach to collective bargaining and employees' right to do so. The Western Massachusetts Workers Rights Board will seek out the businesses and request whether they want to participate. Those that participate will be identified as such. Pooler stated that he did not think the Town would be liable for any exclusions from the list since it is not the organization actively trying to get businesses to sign on as Right to Organize businesses.

The Committee voted 6-0 to take No position on Article 35.

5. Other matters contained within Town Manager FY15 budget

None.

6. New information affecting budget

None.

7. Consider, vote on Town Meeting Articles affecting Fiscal Year 2015 budget

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend Article 3.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend Article 4.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$4,204,149 be raised and appropriated for the Hampshire County Retirement System assessment in Article 7.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$35,928 be raised and appropriated for the Hampshire County Regional Lockup Facility assessment in Article 8.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$100,000 be raised and appropriated to the OPEB Trust Fund in Article 9.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend the reauthorization of the revolving fund used for the After School Program with a \$400,000 expenditure limit as specified in Article 10.

The Committee voted 5-0 with 1 abstention to recommend Article 11. Slaughter recused himself due to his employment at the schools.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$1,778,749 be raised and appropriated for Community Services under Article 12.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$1,161,383 be raised and appropriated for Conservation and Development under Article 12.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$6,333,845 be raised and appropriated for General Government under Article 12.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$2,038,170 be raised and appropriated for Debt Service under Article 12.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$2,076,997 be raised and appropriated for Public Works under Article 12.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$3,801,288 be appropriated from the Water Fund Revenues from the current year for the Water Fund under Article 12.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$3,803,569 be appropriated from the Sewer Fund Revenues from the current year for the Sewer Fund under Article 12.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$491,133 be appropriated from the Solid Waste Fund Revenues from the current year and the Solid Waste Fund Surplus for the Solid Waste Fund under Article 12.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$716,717 be appropriated from the Transportation Fund Revenues from the current year for the Transportation Fund under Article 12.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$9,596,952 be raised and appropriated for Public Safety with \$7,212,392 raised by taxation and \$2,384,560 to be transferred from the Ambulance Receipts Reserved for Appropriation Account under Article 12.

The Committee voted 5-0 with 1 abstention to recommend under Article 12 an Amherst-Pelham Regional School Budget of \$29,618,478 and that the Town raise and appropriate \$14,463,908 as its share of that budget. Slaughter recused himself due to his employment at the schools.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend under Article 12 a Library Services Budget of \$2,369,592 and that the Town raise and appropriate \$1,788,533 as its share of that budget.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$100,000 be raised and appropriated for the Reserve Fund for FY15 under Article 13.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend the \$380,000 expenditure under Article 20 Part A as an appropriate use of CPA funds.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend the \$750,000 expenditure under Article 20 Part C as an appropriate use of CPA funds.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$125,000 be appropriated from Free Cash in the Undesignated Fund Balance of the General Fund with \$70,000 for Craig's Doors Emergency Homeless Shelter, \$35,000 for the Survival Center Food Pantry Project, and \$20,000 for Town of Amherst Social Service Emergency Funds in FY15 under Article 21.

The Committee voted 6-0 to defer to Town Meeting consideration of Articles 22 and 23.

8. Member reports – liaisons and committees

Theilman reported that the Superintendent has formed a working group to review the Regional Agreement assessment method since Shutesbury is seeking a review of the currently used method and the exploration of other methods.

9. Minutes of previous meetings

The Committee voted 6-0 to approve the minutes of April 1st, 2014.

10. Next Meetings and Agendas

The next meeting will be April 10th, 2014. Agenda items will include the zoning articles, the restrictive covenant article, the Elementary Schools budget, petition articles, and perhaps the Capital Program.

11. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting

Weiss, petitioner for Article 39, presented his original intention for Article 39 and the modified motion that he will make at Town Meeting. He stated that he seeks to get a “sense of Town Meeting” with respect to the Town purchasing and then placing affordable housing restrictions on the Echo Village Apartments.

The Committee voted 6-0 to take No position on the motion, as amended, to be presented to Town Meeting under Article 39.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend Article 1.

The Committee voted 6-0 to defer to Town Meeting consideration of Article 2.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$61,058 be transferred within the FY14 Operating Budget from General Government to Public Safety, in the amount of \$46,947, and Public Works, in the amount of \$14,138, in the motion under Article 6 Part A.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$54,000 be transferred from the Ambulance Receipts Reserved for Appropriation account to the Public Safety account within the FY14 Operating Budget to cover additional staffing and computer replacement in the motion under Article 6 Part B.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend \$160,028.47 be transferred from the Fund Balance Reserved for Overlay Surplus to the Reserve Fund within the FY14 Operating Budget in the motion under Article 6 Part C.

The Committee voted 6-0 to recommend dismissal of Article 6 Part D.

The Committee voted 5-0 with 1 abstention to recommend Article 18. Slaughter recused himself due to his employment at the schools.

The Committee voted 6-0 to defer to Town Meeting consideration of Articles 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, and 42.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:13 p.m.

Douglas Slaughter, acting clerk

DOCUMENTS USED AT THE MEETING

FY 15 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles 34, 35, and 36

Text of email from Gerry Weiss to the Select Board, Town Manager, and Finance Committee regarding the Motion under Article 40 of the FY 15 Annual Town Meeting

Photocopy of the petition article regarding Echo Village Apartments submitted for inclusion in the FY15 Annual Town Meeting (became Article 40)

Article assignment sheet for FY15 Annual Town Meeting

Memo from the Finance Director to the Finance Committee regarding Article 36 of the FY15 Annual Town Meeting