

Approved 6/12/15

Amherst Finance Committee Minutes
Wednesday, April 29, 2015, 6 PM
Music Room, Amherst-Pelham Regional Middle School

ATTENDANCE:

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Sandy Pooler, Finance Director; Amherst Media.

Meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm.

AGENDA AND DISCUSSION

1. Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles – consideration of committee recommendations on Articles deferred until Town Meeting and reconsideration of recommendations on other Articles as necessary.

Article 18. Free Cash. Wait for other Town Meeting actions.

Article 23. Butterfield Terrace Rezoning. The Select Board will move to refer this article to the Planning Board. There was opposition to this rezoning at a Public Hearing. Comments included intrusion of more dense housing into neighborhoods and effect on property values. The Finance Committee previously voted to support this article on the assumption that increased development on these properties would increase the tax basis. **The Finance Committee voted 4-0-2 absent, 1 vacancy, to support referral to the Planning Board** with an explanation of our previous vote. (Sharma was not present for this vote but concurred after arriving.)

Article 25. Mixed Use Building Amendments. Town counsel has said that this article is not within the scope of present zoning. An old copy of the bylaw was used for wording. There are technical problems which could cause liability issues. The Planning Board Report says that this petition would make private development in the downtown area, where denser development should be encouraged, more difficult. **The Finance Committee voted 4-0-1 absent, 1 vacancy, to recommend dismissal of this article** as written.

Article 26. Earned Sick Leave. The Select Board has accepted the Personnel Board policy on sick and personal time for part-time employees. This petition article attempts to apply the state November 2014 ballot question on this issue to town employees. According to town counsel, the language of this article does not do this. Discussion included bylaws versus policy, conflicts with union contracts, and interfering with administrators running departments. Benefits might be less generous than under the current personnel policy and it would cost more to administer, having to keep track of all employees working more than 90 days. **The Finance Committee voted 5-0-1 absent, 1 vacancy, to refer this article back to the Personnel Board for further study,** in agreement with the Select Board position.

2. Other matters contained within FY16 budget - None.

3. New information affecting budget. The House Ways and Means Budget came out last week and still has a shortfall. Pooler distributed and discussed FY16 Cherry Sheets State Assessments and Local Aid Estimates charts. The Assessment chart shows a \$100,874 shortfall due to the state not reimbursing a high enough percentage of charter tuition. There is also a \$41,067 shortfall in Veterans' Benefits, which appear to be going down. The Assessment for Charter Sending Tuition seems to be pretty good. The net of state aid and assessments, \$131,246, is the shortfall at this time.

4. FY15 Third Quarter Revenue and Expense Report. Pooler distributed and discussed the 3rd Quarter Report. The town has collected 78% of revenues as of March 31, 2015, 75% of the fiscal year. Pool revenue, fines and forfeits, investment income, and hotel/motel taxes are down. Meals taxes are up and property tax collections are on pace. Most expenses are on target, however, the snow and ice budget has a \$252,000 deficit which will be covered with \$264,000 from the Overlay Surplus in July.

5. Member reports – liaisons and committees. None.

6. Minutes of previous meetings. None.

7. Next Meetings and Agendas. None scheduled.

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 pm.

Janice Ratner, acting clerk

Documents used:

Finance Committee Report, April 27, 2015 Annual Town Meeting

Article Assignments, April 27, 2015

FY15 Municipal Budget/Actual Reports for Quarter Ending March 31, 2015, April 14, 2015

Two Town of Amherst charts: FY16 Cherry Sheets Local Aid Estimates and FY16 Cherry Sheets State Assessments