

**Amherst Finance Committee Meeting Agenda**  
**Jan. 28, 2016, 7 p.m.**  
**First-floor meeting room, Town Hall**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Attendance:** Kay Moran (Chair), Stephen Braun, Bernie Kubiak, Janice Ratner, Anurag Sharma, Marylou Theilman (Vice Chair) Absent: Tim Neale.

**Others attending:** Sonia Aldrich, Comptroller and Liaison to Finance; Claire McGinnis, Treasurer/Collector and Liaison to Joint Capital Planning Committee (JCPC); Sharon Sharry, Library Director; Robert Pam, Library Trustee & Treasurer; Matt Blumenfeld, Library Consultant; Guilford Mooring, Superintendent of Public Works; Amy Rusiecki, Assistant Superintendent of Public Works; Larry Kelly, Reporter; and Amherst Media.

**Agenda:**

News Affecting the Budget:

Aldrich reported that she had just received the Governor's budget and had not discussed it with either of the Interim Managers. She noted that the information would be available for next week's meeting. The two areas she did note were Chapter 70, which appeared to be about \$5,000 lower than Pooler's revenue prediction in October, and Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) about \$50,000 above.

Budget Presentations:

Library Services: *(See Jones Library—Proposed Fiscal Year 2017 Town Library Budget and Five Year Capital Plan)*

Sharry's presentation was given in two parts: Operating Budget and Building Study. The FY17 Operating Budget Summary on page 14 indicates only a slight increase in personnel services because staff members who retired recently earned more than their replacements. Employee benefit increases are related to increased costs for unemployment and worker's compensation. On that line, the figure in FY16 is the budgeted figure. The actual figure is \$283,000, which is an \$8,000 change for FY17-18.

There is a need for more support in the IT area for services "behind the scenes." Presently there is one Technology Specialist/IT, who works 37.5 hours per week, which is not enough to service three libraries. Computers are replaced on a regular cycle for both the public and the Library. Special Collections hours are limited due to limited resources.

Library State Aid goes directly to the Library and does not have to be spent in the same fiscal year as received, but can be carried over. Presently there is approximately \$180,000 in the account and a check for an additional \$40,000 is expected. Money from the account is being used to supplement Library expenses rather than using funds over and above the 4% or \$25,000 from the Endowment fund this year. In 2012 the Endowment was \$7.2 million and presently it is \$7.5 million. The increase, in part, is a result of a vote by the Trustees to not use more than 4% of the Endowment toward operating expenses. The Endowment is now managed by a Vanguard Index Manager. Woodbury Funds are spent sparingly.

This year \$44,000 has been raised through fundraising with a goal of \$70,000. Since fundraising is labor and time intensive, along with other reasons, less money is being raised.

On April 28, 2016, at Mead Art Museum on the Amherst College Campus, the Jones Library Annual Signature Fund Raising Event will be held honoring local writers Polly Longworth and Aaron Lansky.

The Library Trustees have selected the architects for the Library renovation, and they will have a final design and cost estimate this October, 2016. In the Spring of 2017, Town Meeting will be asked to authorize the Library Trustees to apply for and receive a grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC). In July of 2017, the MBLC will announce the top funded 5-10 projects out of the 30-35 projects applying for the grant. Remaining projects are listed in priority order and will be funded in that order. If Amherst's proposal is accepted, a final Town Meeting vote will be required in the Fall of 2017, to authorize the Town's financial share of the project. The MBLC will provide 50% of the cost in increments of 30%, 30%, 30% and 10%. The Town's share is paid after the last MBLC payment.

MBLC funding will cover both renovation and new design. Presently the capital needs include repairs to the atrium, HVAC system, sprinkler system and insulation, which would be paid through this funding. The MBLC requires that there be enough space to provide 20 years of service and meet the needs of the future. The MBLC provides an incentive for green buildings.

The overall plan is to expand as little as possible and to preserve as much green space and gardens as possible in some shape or form. In terms of the Strong House, the interest is in the back yard only. No other property in Town is or was being considered.

Many forms of funding are being considered along with the Tax Credit and Historical state Tax Credit Programs and Community Preservation Act funding.

Sharry will send a detailed list and time-line schedule to the Finance Committee.

Public Works: (See *Town of Amherst Proposed Budget Fiscal Year 2017, pages 65-80*)

Mooring reported that the Department was doing well. The relatively light snowfall to date has helped. In addition, the Highway staff operating budget is underfunded and uses Chapter 90 project work every year to make up the difference. This year underfunding is \$55,000. Ten years ago it was \$120,000 and is gradually being brought down. This year savings from the installation of LED street lights was used to make up some of the difference.

The Town will apply for a 5 year permit from the EPA this year to begin addressing waste water issues as directed under the National Discharge Elimination System (NDES) which addresses construction, education and discharge detection. The Town's present Conservation requirements as applied to construction meets the NDES permit construction requirements. Discharge detection requires the Town to check for illegal discharge into streams, brooks and rivers. Sampling tests are part of the process. The intent is to protect the environment from contaminants in water runoff. In the second year the Town will lay out a program and look at cost according to NDES requirements. Funding would be explored. Several communities have accounts labeled, Storm Water Utility Fund, which are Enterprise Funds. In response to a question regarding the number of additional staff needed, Mooring said that a ball park figure would be between 5-10. He also noted that Amherst is fortunate to have separate storm and sewage systems---two separate systems unlike some communities which have the two combined.

The Tree and Grounds budget is down slightly due to the retirement of some relatively higher-paid employees who have been replaced with new hires.

Mooring reported that the feasibility study for renovating or building a new Department of Public Works (DPW) headquarters is nearly finished and multiple sites are being considered. The Manager formed a committee which looked at facility needs and possible sites. Wesson and Samson were hired to help with the study. The committee will have 3 or 4 more meetings and report to the Select Board, who will appoint a larger committee to look at both the DPW and Fire Station projects. Building Options will be considered with design money requested next year.

Chapter 90 funds are prescriptive and are used for certain equipment, roads and sidewalks if they are part of a road repair project. The Department tries to do roads and sidewalks together as one construction project. The Town spent \$200,000 last year to repair pot holes. Working with a contractor and using his paving equipment, the Town was able to do stretches of much damaged pavement rather than filling individual pot holes. This year \$100,000 of Chapter 90 funds will be used to continue the project. Amherst has 125 miles of Town owned roads, and some roads in Amherst are owned by the State. The Town is using ground-penetrating radar (GPR) to monitor the condition of its roads. Today's estimate for repairing all Town roads to an acceptable condition is approximately \$16,000,000.

Enterprise funds: (See Town of Amherst Proposed Budget Fiscal Year 2017, pages 125-165)

Water Fund: Water rates will increase by 10 cents per 100 CF in FY17 in order to build up the Water Fund's reserves.

Sewer Fund: Undersized pipes are the first to be replaced. In time waste water upgrades will be needed, and money has been set aside in the Capital Plan for upgrades.

Solid Waste Fund: The fund made a profit last year and will do better this year. Adding the Ruxton property to the Solid Waste Fund also adds the revenue from its cell tower. Also, the Departments of the Town are now being charged for bringing

their waste to the transfer station. Recycling brings in revenue. Amherst gets more for its recycled paper as it operates a dual stream recycling center.

#### **Assignment of Budget Sections for the Finance Committee Report to Spring Town Meeting.**

Braun—Public Works and Conservation & Development

Kubiak—General Government

Moran—Public Safety

Neale—Community Service

Ratner--Library

Sharma—Debt Service and Enterprise Funds

Marylou Theilman—Schools and Regional Schools Assessment Method

Braun and Kubiak—Joint Capital Planning Committee

#### **Member Reports—Reports from Liaisons and Representatives:**

Joint Capital Planning Committee (JCPC) Braun and Kubiak

Braun, Kubiak and Moran attended the 1/28/16 morning meeting of the (JCPC). The Chair is Doug Slaughter of the Select Board. The group discussed the major capital projects and "played" with the Pooler spreadsheet. It was noted that JCPC would not be picking and choosing projects but determining how to fund the projects within the Town's ability to pay.

School Department Theilman  
Elementary School Project

The School Building Committee will decide on 2/2/16 which building Option it will recommend. Building recommendations are usually based on the Education Plan and Grade Configuration submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA). Mike Morris, Assistant Superintendent, school project person, will send cost updates to the Finance Committee as they are received. There are numerous stages of oversight by independent professionals who review costs as the project moves along.

Consolidation Plan

The Middle School and High School Consolidation Report from Kathleen Mazur was received and presented to the Regional School Committee on 1/26/16. It was recommended that a vote be taken on Consolidation in the fall because of the scope and the fact that the four Towns did not have an opportunity to discuss the report. Mazur also encouraged the RSC to discuss Consolidation along with potential Regionalization, although some RSC members believe that they are two decidedly different issues.

Regionalization

After four years of study, the RSC will vote on 2/23/16 whether they will send the Amended Regional Agreement forward with their recommendation to the four Towns for their votes. Two thirds of the RSC must vote to recommend and move forward. If they do, then the four Towns will vote. Theilman will email copies of the Amended Agreement to FC members, along with some draft financial questions.

**Minutes of Previous Meeting(s):** None

**Next Meeting and Agenda:**

Meeting: Thursday, February 4, 2016, 7:00p.m.,

Agenda: FY17 Budget Presentations

- Public Safety
  - Fire/EMS
- Public Safety
  - Police
  - Animal Welfare
  - Communications Center
  - Regional Lockup Assessment
- General Government
  - Selectboard/Town Manager
  - Town Meeting/Finance Committee
  - Legal

**Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by Chair 48 Hours in Advance of Meeting.** None

**Adjourned:** 9:40p.m.

**Submitted by:**

Marylou Theilman, Acting Clerk

**Documents Used at the Meeting:**

Jones Library—Proposed Fiscal Year 2017 Town Library Budget  
and Five Year Capital Plan

