

Approved: 04/14/16

**Amherst Finance Committee Minutes
Thursday, April 7, 2016, 7 PM
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall**

ATTENDANCE:

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Sonia Aldrich, Comptroller and co-Finance Director; David Ziomek, Planning and Conservation Director; Chris Brestrup, Interim Planning Director; Rob Crouner and Steve Shreiber, Planning Board; Eric Broudy, Public Art Commission; Guilford Mooring, Public Works Superintendent; Amherst Media.

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

AGENDA AND DISCUSSION

1. News affecting the budget No news affecting budget.

2. Article 21. Hawthorne Farm Ziomek distributed a map of the Hawthorne property and explained that this parcel was originally purchased for three purposes: open space, recreation, and community housing. This article specifies the acreage to be used for housing and allows the Select Board to lease or convey the land for that purpose. Habitat for Humanity is already putting up houses there which will be affordable in perpetuity. The houses will be taxable. Motion to **RECOMMEND** Article 21 was approved by a vote of 6-0-1 absent. (Kubiak will write up.)

3. Zoning Bylaw amendments Crouner presented the four zoning articles, 26-30.

Article 27. Separate B-L (Limited Business) and COM (Commercial) Districts in Table 3, Dimensional Regulations

This article separates the dimensional requirements listed for the Limited Business and Commercial districts into separate columns. Currently, they are combined in a single column. This does not change the requirements but will make it easier if there are changes made to either category in the future. There are no financial implications.

Motion for **NO RECOMMENDATION** on Article 27 was voted, 6-0-1 absent. Explanation can be included in write up by Braun.

Article 28. University Drive Rezoning - OP (Office Park) to B-L (Limited Business)

Passage of this article would change the zoning on the parcel of land south of Newmarket Center, currently used for farming, from OP to B-L. Newmarket Center and the west side of University Drive are zoned B-L; property south of this parcel is zoned OP. Limited Business allows uses in addition to OP uses, including some retail and residential. It makes development more possible, however, this property is wet and has serious drainage problems. Any developer would have to address these problems.

Motion to **RECOMMEND** Article 28 was approved by a vote of 6-0-1 absent. Development of this property could be beneficial to the town, financially. (Neale will write up.)

Article 29. Cluster Subdivision Issues

This article would make some changes to fix three issues regarding cluster subdivisions. One

would make three categories of subdivisions instead of the current one category. Non-owner occupied would require a special permit while owner occupied and affordable categories would be allowed by right. The second would reduce dimensions for property such as frontage and the third would add a definition of "Yield Plan" which is a map showing the layout of the subdivision (dwelling units, streets, etc.). These changes would add a few more regulations but would make for more clarity for both developers and administrators. It would make developing a Retreat style subdivision, which failed on its own, more difficult.

Motion to **RECOMMEND** Article 29 was approved by a vote of 6-0-1 absent. It will provide clarity and make the bylaw easier to administer. (Kubiak will write up).

Article 30. Mixed Use Building Standards and Conditions

This article adds a clear definition of mixed use buildings following a previous citizen petition's attempt to do so. Residential use should be in the rear of the first floor and on other floors, not on the streetscape. Other first floor uses are specified. The number of 4 bedroom units should be limited to 25% of the total number of units so as not to allow a "monoculture" or dormitory-style development. Parking should not be on the streetscape and onsite parking should be encouraged. Permitting would still be by SPR (Site Plan Review).

Motion to **RECOMMEND** Article 30 was approved by a vote of 6-0-1 absent. It will provide clarity. (Neale will write up).

4. Article 26. Percent for Art general bylaw

The Town Warrant has been signed so the wording for this article is now available. (This article was also discussed at a previous meeting.) Broudy noted that Part II would authorize the Select Board to request a Special Act of the Legislature which would make the Town eligible for borrowing for public art expense. Discussion included: enterprise fund projects would be included in eligible projects; Cambridge is the only other Massachusetts community with this type of bylaw but Cambridge is larger than Amherst and has more commercial property; and, other ways to raise funds for public art. Concerns included: increased taxes for property owners; staff administration time and cost; and, adding a priority for art that would take away funding from other areas.

Motion to **NOT RECOMMEND** Article 26 was approved by a vote of 6-0-1 absent. Concerns are listed in above paragraph. (Ratner will write up).

5. Article 35. Appropriate \$30,000 for Charter Consultant - No further information or discussion.

6. Review other articles

Article 17B. Water Fund (Capital Fund -Debt Repurpose)

Previously, \$4.2 million was borrowed to renovate the Centennial Water Plant and replace the existing pump station and sewer line. The last two items were done but the water plant renovations have not been done and require more study. The town borrowed the whole amount up front because of low interest rates, something that is not usually done. Arbitrage rules do not allow the town to hold on to this money and earn interest on it so the Town wants to re-appropriate it for other water line projects (Dickinson Street and Pomeroy Lane) that would be done in the future anyway.

Motion to **RECOMMEND** Article 17B was approved by a vote of 6-0-1 absent. (Kubiak will write up).

Article 5: FY2016 Budget Amendments

Part A transfers \$40,000 from Planning, Conservation and Inspections (where there were savings due to vacancies in Inspections Services and the Assistant/Interim Town Manager's salary was charged to the Town Manager's salary line) to the Public Safety (\$30,000) and Community Services (\$10,000) areas. Public Safety needed more funds for education incentive (\$20,000) and to replace the HVAC system at the North Fire Station (\$10,000). Community Services needed more funds (\$10,000) for extra help in the Pools budget due to the minimum wage increase.

Motion to **RECOMMEND** Article 5, Part A was approved by a vote of 6-0-1 absent.

Part B will be dismissed.

Motion to **DISMISS** Article 5, Part B was approved by a vote of 6-0-1 absent.

Articles 31 and 32 - Zoning - 67 Amity Street DEFERRAL TO TOWN MEETING - waiting for Planning Board.

Articles 24 and 25 Free Cash and Stabilization - DEFERRAL TO TOWN MEETING approved by a vote of 6-0-1 absent.

7. Member reports – liaison and representative reports - Theilman mentioned a newspaper article about the Select Board regarding the Capital Plan and the 4 major projects.

8. Minutes of previous meetings - The minutes of the February 11, 2016 meeting were approved by a vote of 6-0-1 absent. The minutes of the March 24, 2016 meeting were approved by a vote of 5-0-1 absent, 1 abstain. The minutes of the March 31, 2016 meeting were approved by a vote of 6-0-1 absent

5. Next Meeting and Agenda - The next Finance Committee meeting will be Thursday, April 14, 2016. Agenda items include Articles 31, 32, and 38.

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:36 pm.

Janice Ratner, acting clerk

Documents used:

Town Warrant, FY17 Annual Town Meeting, May 2, 2016
(Town of Amherst Proposed Budget Fiscal Year 2017)

Handouts: March 31, 2016 Memo Re: Financial Articles Annual Town Meeting
Warrant

Financial Projections - General Fund, Draft, March 21, 2016
Article Assignments as of 4/7/2016
Map for Article 21, 2016 Spring Annual Town Meeting: Transfer of
Custody-Hawthorne Property