

Amherst Finance Committee Minutes  
Thursday, April 14, 2016  
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Sonia Aldrich, Comptroller and acting Co-Finance Director; Charter Commission Members (Article 35): Andrew Churchill (Chair), Mandi Jo Hanneke (Vice Chair), Nick Grabbe (member), Irv Rhodes (member); Maria Kopicki (petitioner Article 38); Sean Mangano (Director of Finance for the Schools), Mike Morris (Assistant Superintendent of Schools); Larry Kelley (Reporter).

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Meeting called to order at 7:02 PM

Several members of the Charter Commission attended to discuss Article 35 and their reasoning for requesting funds for hiring a consultant(s) to help with research and work of the commission. A discussion during the presentation revealed that the requested amount was reasonable and consistent with funds spent by similar commissions elsewhere in the state.

Vote to recommend: Yes, 7-0

#### Article 38

Kopicki presented the article requesting \$40,000 to hire a third party consultant to evaluate the costs associated with renovating the Wildwood and Fort River school buildings. A lively discussion ensued, the main argument being that it was necessary for the town to conduct thorough due diligence for a strategically important project that may require about \$35 million to demolish Wildwood and Fort River schools and replace them with a new 2-school building on the Wildwood site. The chief argument against the article was that the schools have already done the diligence during the feasibility study, and spending more would not be a productive or even useful allocation of the money. Timing and logistics of such an evaluation were also an issue for some members.

Vote to not recommend: 4 in favor, 2 opposed, 1 abstain.

Aldrich (Comptroller and Acting Finance Director) provided an update on the budget. She noted that compared to the Governor's budget, the estimated receipts in the House Ways and Means budget were lower by \$156,037. However, the assessments were lower by \$200,183 so the net was a positive \$44,146. Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) funds are in line with expectations, the differences were mainly in Charter spending and reimbursements. There was a small drop of about \$8,000 in veterans' reimbursement. Overall, the town's estimates were realistic and thus far there is no need to make any changes to the projections.

Ratner reported that the library design subcommittee discussed the timelines of the project and the desire to limit the size of the new building to be about 68,000 square feet.

Handouts: Massachusetts School Building Authority's letter to Town Manager.

Adjourned 8:55 pm

Acting Clerk, Anurag Sharma