

Amherst Finance Committee Minutes
Wednesday, September 7, 2016
Police Community Room

ATTENDANCE: Marylou Theilman (Chair), Steve Braun (Vice-Chair), Joseph Jayne, Tim Neale, Janice Ratner, Anurag Sharma.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Paul Bockelman, Town Manager; Sonia Aldrich, Comptroller, Finance Department; Claire McGinnis, Finance Department; Amherst Media; Maria Kopicki.

Meeting called to order at 7:03 PM

1. Capital Projects.

Draft proposal by Braun regarding the debt exclusion override ballot vote regarding the Amherst school project. (Handout)

This neutral draft reflects comments from a lot of different people. This is a legitimate thing for FC to be doing – op ed in newspaper. Not using public funds to promote or transmit opinions. Newspaper running this for free.

Discussion ensued. Tentatively use numbers for 25-year bond and provide a range of costs to property owners. Advisable to wait for MSBA final numbers by the end of September.

More discussion with Theilman explaining the process with the MSBA under different scenarios. Voters need to know what happens if the vote is NO. Braun explained that a NO vote does not mean that the town loses MSBA monies, that there are several other options.

Braun will revise per feedback from the Committee and re-circulate for review.

Discussion ensued about the longer piece for the town website. In general, that piece will include more information such as bond facts, other projects, OPEB, and overall indebtedness of the town.

Theilman provided an overview of the other capital projects, using the handout she had compiled. Information included the estimated total cost of 3 of the projects using a 20, 25, or 30-year bond, including interest, principal and total cost.

Jayne gave an update on the meeting held in August by the committee exploring options for a new fire station and DPW building. Eighty percent of the meeting about vetting the architecture firm. Building a website for the DPW, separate from the town's website. Discussed the DPW site and holding an open house for the public to learn more about the building and the needs of the department. They also discussed the public relations campaign to educate the town about what they do.

Neale commented on funding the major capital projects. See his email to Theilman in the Theilman handout for all capital projects. Discussed other sources of funds and/or revenues to help defray these costs. Some such sources discussed was selling the fort river school building and current fire station building in town.

2. Draft of Community Calendar for Budget Input

Theilman provided a draft budget timeline so people may know the correct times for providing input/public comment during the budget process. Discussion ensued about making the calendar clearer and simpler, perhaps by organizing it chronologically rather than by organizational entity.

3. Suggestions for outreach to other Committees and Community

LWV School Forum 9/28/16 from 7pm-9pm in ARMS Auditorium. Braun and Theilman will attend to present information and answer questions related to the upcoming vote on a debt exclusion override.

4. Final YTD budget report for FY16

Aldrich discussed these unaudited reports. For details, see handout: Report to Finance Committee and the Select Board.

5. Update on the financial projections – General Fund

Aldrich discussed the financial projections, general fund. For details, see the handout.

6. Update on the Cherry sheet

Aldrich discussed the numbers on the cherry sheet. For details, see the handout.

7. Member reports – Liaisons and Committees. See report by Jayne in #1 above. Ratner went to library design committee meetings and will attend future meetings.

8. Next meeting and agenda: 9/29/16 @ 7pm to finalize Braun's draft and further discuss capital needs.

9. Other Meetings

Five Board Meeting Capital Projects 9/14/16 at 7:00pm in the Town Room (Finance Committee and others)

Financial Indicators Meeting 10/13/16 (630-830) in the Town Room.

(Finance Committee, Select Board, School Committee, Library Trustees). Also FC will meet after this meeting to finalize the guidelines.

10. Minutes of previous meetings - July 12, 2016. Approved as amended, 6-0 with 1 absent.

11. Braun handed out a sheet describing the file naming convention for FC minutes.

Meeting adjourned 9:42 p.m.

Acting Clerk
Anurag Sharma

Handouts:

- 1) Financial Draft review for the Amherst School Building Project;
- 2) Major capital projects including projects of bonding costs for each;
- 3) Report to Finance Committee and the Select Board;
- 4) Financial Projections-General Fund,
- 5) Cherry sheet, and
- 6) file naming convention document