

Draft
Amherst Finance Committee Minutes
March 2, 2017, 7:00pm
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

ATTENDANCE:

Marylou Theilman (Chair), Joseph Jayne, Tim Neale, Janice Ratner, Anurag Sharma, Bernie Kubiak, Steve Braun.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Sonia Aldrich (Co-Finance Director), Claire McGinnis (Treasurer/Collector), Guilford Mooring (Superintendent, DPW), Amherst Media.

Meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm.

AGENDA AND DISCUSSION

1. Transportation Fund- Claire McGinnis discussed the *Bike Share program*. Town will pay for three bike stations at a cost of \$26,000 which they hope to cover with sponsorships. Receipts from the federal gas tax program also helps pay for this program. Northampton, Holyoke, S. Hadley and Springfield will also participate in this regional program.

Parking Paystations at town lots: cost for the town is \$115,000 to install/replace 12 new pay stations. Residents may have the ability to purchase time with phone payment technology. Current machines have outdated technology and need to be replaced.

2. Public Works

Highway construction – FY18 budget is fully funded i.e. not funded in part from projects as in recent past. There was a question about how much money it would cost to fix all street repairs in Amherst. Mooring did not have an estimate yet. In response to the question about the currently un-paved Mill Lane and whether it should be paved to facilitate travel from the eastern side of town to Groff Park, Mooring said such matters can be brought before the new *transportation advisory committee* for consideration. Mooring discussed a machine that his department has been using to fix potholes with a “hot-mix” fill, which is more stable, longer-lasting, and less expensive than using standard “cold-mix.” Machine cost \$80,000.

Snow & Ice- FY18 is level funded. To date in FY17 over budget by \$200,000. Reason is that numerous small storms in Amherst this winter have caused more work for snow removal.

Street & Traffic Light – Electrician who was paid from the enterprise fund will now be paid from the Public Works operating budget. There was discussion about the concern regarding streetlights being too bright and causing residents to lose quality sleep. Mooring said adjustments have been made on individual lamp units to reduce glare or mis-direction of light. He also said that they have replaced two streetlights in front of Jones Library with a better technology that reduces glare. They may begin using more of these lights in appropriate locations.

Equipment Maintenance- Three people maintain all the vehicles for DPW. This excludes fire department vehicles and police vehicles. They do all inspection stickers on vehicles including school busses. There was a discussion on how much space is required by DPW to house all their vehicles. A schematic design study will determine how the vehicles could be housed in a new facility.

Tree & Ground Maintenance- Budget is the same. Sugar maples are on the decline (reason could be older trees or climate). Ash trees have beetle problems. There are 600 trees available to plant out of the 2000-tree campaign started 5 years ago.

Waste Water- No budget change.

Sewer Maintenance- No budget change.

Water Fund – No budget change. Property owners are responsible for water and sewer lines between the town-owned main (typically under the street) to the house. Atkins reservoir is back to 100% full, although much of the region remains technically in a drought condition because the groundwater has not yet fully been recharged by precipitation.

Solid Waste – under budget; not making full contribution to OPEB. Finished solid waste master plan. Solid waste responsibilities include, managing the closed landfills, special events for residents and helping DPW get rid of waste from the department as well as the numerous public trash barrels around town.

3. New affecting the budget – nothing new to discuss.

4. Zoning – Theilman to pass the revised FC Zoning “considerations” along to director of planning and Planning Board.

5. School Project – Wording on the upcoming ballot question to authorize borrowing for the elementary school project will be the same as the language that was on the town meeting warrant last fall. There was a discussion about sending a letter to the editor to document FC’s position on the project for the coming town vote. It was decided that Neale would draft a document for the FC to review which would reflect the FC’s vote on the school project.

6. Committee and Liaison Reports – Braun reported on the recent *JCPC* meeting. The Information Technology capital budget request increased to \$464,000 due to more department needs and technology upgrades. Fire Department request \$512,000 for big-ticket items such as new ambulance as well as Jaws of Life and other equipment.

-Jayne reported no update on Fire /DPW – next meeting is on March 14th.

-Ratner reported on Library – review of summary write up.

-Theilman reported on School committee. Public hearings will be on March 14th and regional assessment will be on the March 9th.

-Cost Drivers Committee – Sharma will review Northampton website information.

7. Minutes of Previous Meetings – The minutes of the February 23, 2017 were approved 5-0, 2 abstentions.

8. Next meeting and budget topics - Thursday, March 9, 2017

Library (Sharon Sharry, Library Director)

School Ballot Override Statement (Neale)

Zoning Consideration Memo to Planning Director and Board (Theilman)

Debt Exclusion Override Process (Aldrich)

The meeting adjourned at 9:36 pm.

Joseph Jayne, acting clerk.

Document used: FY 18 Town Manager's budget, posted on the town website at amherstma.gov/3321