

Amherst Finance Committee Meeting Minutes - DRAFT 1
March 23, 2017, 7:00 pm
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Sonia Aldrich, Co-Finance Director; Chris Brestrup, Planning Director; Rob Crowner, Planning Board; Maurianne Adams, Historic District Study Committee; Amherst Media.

Meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm.

AGENDA AND DISCUSSION

1. Budget and other Topics (Town of Amherst Proposed Budget FY2018)

Amherst Media - Issue has been resolved and was not discussed.

Zoning and Planning Articles - Rob Crowner presented four zoning articles, all of which have minor effects on the Zoning Bylaws.

Article 32 - Table 3 Footnotes - Setbacks - This article applies to three footnotes (d, e, and f) regarding rear and side yard setbacks which are incorporated into the text of Section 6.1. There is no change in substance or financial impact.

Article 33 - Table 3 Footnotes - Miscellaneous - This article applies to two footnotes (h and l) regarding dimensional regulations which are incorporated into the text of Sections 6.1 and 6.6. There is no change in substance or financial impact.

Article 34 - Non-substantive Corrections - This would allow non substantive corrections such as numbering errors, typos, or renumbering to be made in the Bylaw by the Town Clerk upon request by the Planning Board and after a public hearing.

Article 35 - Apartment Bedroom Mix - The current Bylaw has a limit of 24 apartments and requires no more than 50% of these apartments be of the same size (number of bedrooms). This article would waive this requirement for buildings with all affordable apartments other than the manager's apartment. Valley CDC requested this change so that it can build a building with all very small, one bedroom, efficiency type apartments for very low income individuals. Services would probably be provided to residents in need. Students, unless self supporting, would not qualify. It is unclear if these units will be taxable or tax exempt. Financial impact is also unclear at this time.

Article 25 - Local Historic District Bylaw Amendment - This article would establish a new historic district known as North Prospect-Lincoln-Sunset Historic District, similar to the Dickinson Historic District. Steve Braun, a resident of this area, and Maurianne Adams, said that the purpose of the district would be to help preserve the history and the look of the neighborhood. Any changes to properties that are visible from the street would be reviewed by a board of local residents. The District would include 197 residential properties and no business properties. Property values are likely to increase or remain the same; they are unlikely to decrease. Converting a property to multiple units for students could be more difficult. The Planning Board supported this article. (Braun will abstain when the Finance Committee votes on this article)

Joint Capital Planning Committee (Report and Discussion) - Kubiak reported that the amount requested for the Fort River feasibility study has been reduced to \$115,000 for structural and engineering purposes only at this time. This would determine the viability of Fort River.

The Town Manager is suggesting changes to the Finance Committee's Policies and Objectives. He is suggesting: a 10 year, \$10,000 threshold for capital items; a 10 year plan with 9 year projection to project borrowing further into the future; and, debt should not be used for items less than \$100,000. Also, this document should be updated if necessary, e.g. CPA surcharge is now 3%, not 1.5%.

Other Articles on the Warrant; Recommendations - Votes on Articles.

Article 5. Retirement Assessment - \$5,157,420. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 6. Regional Lockup Assessment - \$35,928. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 7. OPEB Trust Fund - \$400,000. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 9A. General Government - \$7,070,104. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 9B. Public Safety - \$10,359,472. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 9C. Regional Schools Assessment - \$15,502,710. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 9D. Elementary Schools - \$22,523,222. Vote to RECOMMEND, 6-1. One negative vote because member didn't agree with merged assistant superintendent position in budget.

Article 9E. Public Works - \$2,326,634. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 9F. Conservation and Development - \$1,421,061. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 9G. Community Services - \$1,800,864. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 9H. Debt Service - \$2,341,275. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0.

Article 9I. Library Services, Town Appropriation - \$1,926,054. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 9J. Sewer Fund - \$4,302,267. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 9K. Water Fund - \$4,372,146. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 9L. Solid Waste Fund - \$469,862. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 9M. Transportation Fund - \$1,164,233. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 10. Reserve Fund - \$100,000. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 12A. CPA - General Projects - \$1,222,163. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 12B. CPA - Cole Property - \$75,000. Need more information.

Article 12C. CPA - Kieras Property - \$125,000. Vote to RECOMMEND, 6-0-1 abstention

Article 12D. CPA - Groff Park - \$500,000. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 16. Water metering. Need more information

Article 17. Personal Property Tax Exemption. Need more information.

Article 18. Special Ed Reserve Fund (Elementary) - \$150,000. Vote to RECOMMEND, 6-0-1 abstention

Article 19. Special Ed Reserve Fund (Region) - no money. Vote to RECOMMEND, 7-0

Article 23. Jones Library Project - Vote to RECOMMEND, 5-1-1 abstention.

(First vote to take no position, 2-5) Passage of this article will allow the library to apply for state funding for the building project and does not involve any funding at this time. It is fiscally responsible to take advantage of this opportunity. The library is now looking at deferred maintenance costs, work that will be needed if the building expansion/renovation does not go forward. The cost of these items alone, without state funding, will be valuable to compare with the cost of the building project.

Article 25. Local Historic District - Vote to RECOMMEND, 3-1-3 abstentions.

Article 26. Public Works Committee - NO RECOMMENDATION, 7-0

Article 27. Bicycle Committee - NO RECOMMENDATION, 7-0

Article 30. Voting Rights - NO RECOMMENDATION, 7-0

Article 31. Release of Restriction - Need more information.

Article 32. Zoning - Setbacks. NO RECOMMENDATION, 7-0

Article 33. Zoning - Miscellaneous. NO RECOMMENDATION, 7-0.

Article 34. Zoning - Non-substantive correction. NO RECOMMENDATION, 7-0.
Article 35. Zoning - Apartment Bedroom Mix. (See above) NO RECOMMENDATION, 7-0.
Article 36. Zoning Petition - Amend Zoning Map - Need more information. This could be like a taking that could be litigated.
Article 37. Petition - Low Income Property Tax Credit - Vote to NOT RECOMMEND, 7-0.
There is no way to tell how much this would cost and how that money would be made up.
This could be a windfall for landlords.
Article 38. Petition - Fire/EMS Staffing and Capital - Vote to NOT RECOMMEND, 7-0.
Article 39. Petition - Carbon Fee - NO RECOMMENDATION, 7-0
Article 40. Petition - Background Checks - NO RECOMMENDATION, 7-0
Article 41. Petition - Transparency in Political Donations - NO RECOMMENDATION, 7-0
Article 42. Petition - Investigate Grounds for Impeachment- NO RECOMMENDATION, 7-0

2. News affecting the Budget - Aldrich reported that the budget is in balance and \$11,000 has been added to the town's expenses for a procurement officer position. This position will be shared with the schools, region, and enterprise funds, all of which already have this position in their budgets. The Regional assessment has decreased due to the assessment method being used for FY18.

3. Committee and Liaison Reports - Also, see above. Neale reported that the Budget Coordinating Group did not meet and does not have a meeting scheduled. Ratner will ask the Library Director to provide results of the deferred maintenance cost study to the Finance Committee when available. Schools will wait until the fall to resume superintendent search.

4. Minutes of Previous Meetings - The minutes of March 9, 2017 were approved by a vote of 7-0 . The minutes of March 16, 2017 were approved as amended by a vote of 5-0, 2 abstentions.

5. Progress on write-ups - deadline March 28, 2017

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

7. Next Meeting and Tentative Topics

Thursday, March 30, 2017
Petition Zoning Article
Remaining Articles
Remaining Recommendations and Votes on Articles
Finalizing Items and Assignments for Town Meeting
Topics for Future Meetings

The meeting adjourned at 10:08 pm.

Janice Ratner, acting clerk

Documents distributed/used:

Town of Amherst Proposed Budget FY2018
Town Warrant, Amherst Annual Town Meeting, April 26, 2017
List of Articles and related information
Financial Projections - General Fund, Draft, March 23, 2017
Proposal for a Shared Procurement Officer
Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards for the year ended June 30, 2016

