

Amherst Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 6, 2017
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

Approved: 8/14/17

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

Others in Attendance: Paul Bockelman (Town Manager), Sonia Aldrich (Co-Finance Director)

Meeting was called to order at 10:10 am.

News affecting the budget

Aldrich reported it was status quo re the budget. Bockelman mentioned that the State is laying the groundwork for a possibly difficult FY19 budget.

Cost Drivers Project

Most of the meeting centered around a discussion about a possible “Cost Drivers” project. Such a discussion and analysis would help educate the Finance Committee and possibly other parties, such as Town Meeting, as to the major cost drivers in the budget. The Committee discussed possible scope and purpose of such a project, mainly attempting to define and identify metrics that are particularly pertinent to both major budgetary cost and revenue enhancement. Essentially, the Committee hopes to understand and address several key questions: (1) why does it cost so much to live in Amherst? (2) what level of services are provided that contribute to that cost? (3) how unique is Amherst compared with neighboring towns and similar communities elsewhere in the Commonwealth? and (4) are there key financial markers (e.g. property 2 ½ limitations) that might limit future budgetary decisions? Such questions can be quite broad, and the answers perhaps value laden, so Bockelman suggested, and the Committee agreed, that as a first step Town staff (Bockelman, Aldrich, McGinnis) would meet with the Finance Committee for two summer meetings so as to identify key budgetary variables, both on the revenue and cost side, that might indeed be seen as major cost drivers.

Committee and liaison reports

None

Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of May 10, 2017 were unanimously approved.

Next Meetings

Monday, July 10, 3:00-5:00 pm

Tuesday, August 29, 10:00 am – noon

Tentative: September 7, 14, 28, all at 7:00 pm

The meeting adjourned at 11:48 am

Timothy A. Neale, acting clerk