

**Amherst Finance Committee Meeting Minutes    Approved 10/19/2017**  
**Thursday, October 12, 2017**  
**First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall**

**Attendance:** Joseph Jayne, Bernie Kubiak, Tim Neale, Sharon Povinelli, Janice Ratner (Vice Chair), Anurag Sharma, Marylou Theilman (Chair).

**Others in Attendance:** Sonia Aldrich, Co-Finance Director

After a recess following the special Joint Meeting earlier in the evening, the Finance Committee reconvened in separate session at 6:45 pm.

**Discussion and Vote on Warrant Articles for the Fall 2017 Town Meeting**

The Committee discussed each Warrant Article, and voted either to Recommend, Do Not Recommend, or make No Recommendation to Town Meeting, based on any expected financial impact of the Article on the Town.

**Article 1 – Reports of Boards and Committees**

**No Recommendation**, as this is an administrative article.

**Article 2 – Free Cash to Stabilization Fund**

At its meeting on 09-28-17, the Finance Committee **Recommended** this Article by a vote of **6-0**, with one member absent.

**Article 3 – Local Option Recreational Marijuana Excise Tax**

**Recommended**, by a vote of **6-0**, with one member absent. After some discussion, the Finance Committee concluded that this Article most likely will have a positive financial impact on the Town, due to potential increased revenue.

**Article 4 – General Bylaw – Limitation on Number of Recreational Marijuana Retail Establishments**

**No Recommendation**, by a vote of **5 in favor** (Jayne, Povinelli, Ratner, Sharma, Theilman) and **2 opposed** (Kubiak, Neale). Those in the affirmative felt that the uncertainty relative to the number of establishments made it difficult to assess any net positive or negative benefit on Town finances, and thus, the Committee should make No Recommendation. Kubiak and Neale felt that any regulation of the number of establishments would be helpful in stabilizing markets, and could assist with future business development. Thus, they would have Recommended this Article as one with potential positive financial benefits for the Town.

**Article 5 – General Bylaw – Prohibition on Public Consumption of Marijuana or Tetrahydrocannabinol**

**No Recommendation**, by a vote of **7-0**. The Committee was unable to definitively identify any meaningful financial implications for the Town, and felt that this Article better addressed matters of public safety than finances.

**Article 6 – Zoning Bylaw- Recreational Marijuana Retailer**

**No Recommendation**, by a vote of **5 in favor**, **2 opposed** (Kubiak and Neale). The majority of the Committee felt that the financial impact on the Town was difficult to determine; thus, the decision to offer no recommendation. Neale and Kubiak felt the Committee should recommend this Article, as it

would establish clear conditions for the location of marijuana retailers and thus could be positive for business development, as well as possibly avert negative business situations should marijuana retailers locate in areas of the Town not considered acceptable.

#### **Article 7 – Zoning Bylaw – Temporary Moratorium on Recreational Marijuana Establishments**

**No Recommendation**, by a vote of **7-0**. The Committee concluded there was no clear sense of any financial implications for the Town.

#### **Article 8 – Zoning Bylaw – Table 4 Footnotes – Miscellaneous**

**No Recommendation**, by a vote of **7-0**. This Article presents no financial impact on the Town.

#### **Article 9 – Zoning Bylaw – Parking Facilities**

**Recommended** by a vote of **4 in favor**, **1 opposed** (Sharma), and **2 abstain** (Ratner, Theilman). Those in the affirmative felt this Bylaw change would make it easier for commercial parking lots or garages to be constructed in the downtown, and thus could have a positive financial impact on the Town through increased business. It also might take the capital burden off the Town should commercial interests construct such lots or garages, as opposed to the use of public funds. Sharma opposed recommending, for he felt the financial impacts of this Article were not clearly identified.

#### **Article 10 – Regional School District Planning Committee**

**Recommended**, by a vote of **7-0**. The Committee felt that any costs expended by the schools or the Town (e.g. to hire an advisor) due to the formation of this committee would be offset by positive long-term financial benefits (e.g. receipt of significant State funds for transportation and incentivization) should regionalization be the end result of the exploration.

#### **Article 11 – Resolution Regarding Charter School Funding and Expansion**

**Recommended** by a vote of **7-0**. The existing State charter school funding formula is financially burdensome for the schools and Town. Although adoption of this Article would result in no binding financial obligation for the Town, the Committee felt it would be wise for Town Meeting to approve this Resolution in support of improved charter school funding and expansion.

#### **Article 12 – General Bylaw – Public Shade Trees**

**No Recommendation**, by a vote of **7-0**. The Committee concluded that adoption of this Article would result in no clearly identifiable financial impact on the Town.

#### **Article 13 – General Bylaw – Town Meeting Advisory Committee**

**No Recommendation**, by a vote of **4 in favor** (Theilman, Povinelli, Sharma, Ratner), **2 opposed** (Neale, Kubiak), and **1 abstain** (Jayne). This final vote followed a previous vote based on a movement by Neale to not recommend the Article, on which the vote was 3 in favor of Do Not Recommend (Kubiak, Jayne, Neale) and 4 opposed to a position of Do Not Recommend (Theilman, Ratner, Sharma, Povinelli). In the final vote, those in favor of making no recommendation felt that any financial impacts on the Town were unclear, and difficult to determine. Those who wished to not recommend this Article to Town Meeting felt that the formation of such a committee was duplicative to existing Town committee deliberations and recommendations, and would result in unnecessary additional Town staff time and involvement.

#### **Article 14 – Petition – Design for Significant Improvements to the North Amherst Library**

**Do Not Recommend**, by a vote of 6-0, with 1 abstain (Povinelli). The Committee could not support expenditure of Town funds to fund a design for a project not properly vetted through the existing Town capital budgetary process (library trustees, annual Town budgetary process, and the Joint Capital Planning Committee). Further, the Committee feels that before any definitive Town funds are expended for such a project, that this project should be prioritized amongst the other existing four major capital projects (elementary school, new fire headquarters, DPW building, and the Jones Library) and other major capital needs (e.g. roads improvements).

#### **Article 15 – Petition – General Bylaw – Net Zero Energy Town Building**

**No Recommendation**, by a vote of 7-0. The financial impacts of the adoption of this Article are complex. Although the petitioner presented some financial information regarding long-term energy savings for the Town that might offset any upfront capital costs of mandating certain net zero energy town buildings, the Committee cautions recommending such an Article without a thorough analysis by Town staff of the immediate, short, and long-term impact on town budgets, as well as on its associated impact on the taxpayer's ability to pay. This is particularly true inasmuch as the four major capital projects, which would be impacted by this Article, are into their planning processes.

#### **Article 16 – Petition – Resolution in Support of 100 Percent Renewable Energy**

**No Recommendation**, by a vote of 7-0. The Committee could come to no conclusion regarding any quantifiable short, immediate, nor long-term financial impacts on the Town.

#### **Article 17 – Petition – Resolution in Support of the End of Life Options Act**

**No Recommendation**, by a vote of 7-0. This Article presents no identifiable financial impact on the Town.

#### **Finance Committee Report to Town Meeting**

The Committee reviewed a final draft of the multi-page introduction to the Finance Committee report to the Fall 2017 Town Meeting. Several edits were suggested, and Neale presented some rewording for the sections dealing with health insurance and the property tax levy. Theilman will seek additional guidance from Town Manager Bockelman before the introduction is finalized.

#### **Financial Information Update**

Reference is made to the 10-12-17 Minutes of the Four Board Meeting held in the Town Room, Town Hall.

#### **Transportation Committee – Parking Fees**

Theilman reported that the Transportation Committee will be making recommendations for adjustments to the parking fees and fines, and asked the Committee whether or not it wanted to learn more, and have input into a final decision. Consensus was that this was a good idea, and in the future, it might be wise to have such review by the Finance Committee relative to other potential adjustments to Town fees, fines, permits, and licenses.

#### **Committee and liaison reports**

Theilman reported that the regional school assessment committee met and will look at six assessment methods in their continuing attempt to finalize a consensus, hopefully by January 1, 2018.

#### **Minutes of previous meetings**

None were discussed.

**Topics not reasonably anticipated by chair 48 hours in advance of Meeting**

None

**Next Meeting**

Thursday, October 19, 2017 to discuss Finance Committee guidelines for the FY19 budget.

The meeting adjourned at 9:04 pm.

Timothy A. Neale, acting clerk

Documents distributed, used:

*Town Warrant, FY18 Special Town Meeting, 11-06-17*