



Town of Acton Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: July 10th, 2018

Town Hall Room 204 7:30 pm

.....

Members in Attendance: Steve Noone, Jason Cole, Mike Majors, Dave Wellinghoff, Jeff Bergart, Christi Andersen, Thomas Farley, Sahana Purohit (associate), Christine Russell

Absent: Roland Bourdon

Other: none

Called to order at: 7:30

Public Participation:

Terra Freidrichs presented a request to take a broad look at strategic lot purchases especially in light of the recent housing study that pushes for high-density housing. She cited statistics stating that the town has lower land preserved per person than the city of Philadelphia.

She pointed out the benefits of cumulative planning because most projects are deemed to have “no impact” but all of the projects over time do add up to impact. Town planning doesn’t look at how each project has an impact on water and road capacity use.

She voiced concerns about the West Acton Sewer growth. The project was presented as trying to add sewers to be on track with the school building, however the permits show that additional units being added are actually coming from residential properties.

ALG Meeting Review:

The first ALG meeting of the year was mostly a get to know you meeting. They are considering moving meetings to nighttime. The finance committee representatives staked out the position that reserves should be used for capital, not onetime items.

Presentation on Capital Projects at ABRSD from FINCOM Liason to ABRSC

Christine Russell reported on her meeting with Interim Superintendent Bill McAlduff to discuss the current state of and future plans for School District Capital Projects. Mr. McAlduff says that, based on his experience, the D&W report recommendations are on par for a district of our size with our age buildings. The capital improvement plan was updated when the new twin school was approved in order to remove items that no longer would need to be done. Important repairs were made to Douglas, Gates, and Conant regardless of their future potential replacement. Previous work was reviewed to understand its costs and their relationship to the D&W projections. Much of the work has been done significantly below projection thanks to being handled in house without needing to include design fees, etc. (added 40% to costs) that were included in the D&W report budget. Based on this experience, the future maintenance budget is not projected to be as high as projected.

The district has developed a 5-year Capital Project plan. The next 5-year plan will be volatile until we know which school is being replaced along with Douglas. Going forward the plan will be updated yearly and included in the budget cycle to ensure ongoing maintenance.

Regarding the recent teacher contract increases, this level of increase is common across the state and represents a right sizing of salaries based on ~1% raises teachers received during the recession.

First Pass on Point-of-View Topics

The slides from last year were updated with the most recent demographic numbers. There are concerns about complexity of explaining Prop 2½.

A recommendation was made that the Prop 2 ½ slide be combined with the compensation slide to connect the idea of tax increase limits with the compensation increases that are a significant portion of the town and school district budgets.

In order to better fulfill the Finance Committee's advisory role, it is considering the following recommendations:

- Insist on Finance Committee representation on school district capital working group
- Request a period of comment between school contract negotiations and their approval

A request was made to consider adding a slide citing improvements in the financial situation of the town and school district since the last Point of View was written.

Committee Business

Minutes: none

Committee Reports:

Kelley's Corner – Sahana Purohit

446 Mass Ave is a proposed senior low-income development. It would have 31 units for people aged 62+ and people with disabilities. This development would qualify towards affordable housing goal in town. There are current 70+ seniors on waiting list for this type of housing.

Public attendees raised concerns about the density and proximity to schools. No traffic study was required because of size of project but it might impact the current traffic design for the 111 and Route 27 intersection. Neighbors expressed concern about the three floors of the building, but it is designed to come in below the height requirements for a building based on the zoning. With permit in hand, the project would take 2-3 years for ground breaking.

Train Station – Dave Wellinghoff

The discussion continues about the need for parking at train station. A parking deck is in consideration as well as the potential use of Rivers St property owned by town. The increasing need for parking includes the bike lockers being full. Given the placement of the parking lots, they are considering whether there should be a traffic study.

Minuteman – Mike Majors

The school building project continues to be under time and under budget.

School Building Committee – Jason Cole

Designer proposals were reviewed. Top candidates will be presented to the MSBA for review and selection. The town has little vote in the final selection.

Walker Property – Mike Majors

Using a grant from state, there was a study of the feasibility of a boutique hotel on the Walker property on Main Street. The study was completed but results won't be shared until July 23rd.

Schedule:

The next Finance Committee meeting, on July 24th, will be held in the public safety building.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20

Respectfully submitted,
Christi Andersen
Finance Committee Clerk