



# Town of Acton Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
Town Hall Room 204 7:30 pm

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Members in Attendance: Jason Cole, Mike Majors, Roland Bourdon, Dave Wellinghoff, Jeff Bergart, Christi Andersen, Tom Farley

Absent: Sahana Purohit (associate), Christine Russell, Steve Noone

Other: Stephen Barrett Director of Finance, Town of Acton

Called to order at: 7:35

**Public Participation:**

Angie Tso stated that marijuana town bans are showing up in real estate listings and could already be affecting house values.

John Peterson pointed out that Acton is not isolated regarding the potential consumption of marijuana. Banning retail locations in Acton will not prevent Acton from feeling an impact of increased consumption due to increased availability. In analyzing potential impact and tax revenue, he pointed out that we could compare alcohol consumption in dry towns versus those that allow alcohol sales.

**Special Town Meeting Preparation**

**Assignment of Articles**

Jon Benson from the Board of Selectmen clarified that there is not an HDC article in the upcoming warrant for the December 3<sup>rd</sup> Special Town Meeting. He also explained that articles 2 and 3 would be skipped if article 1 were to pass.

There was a discussion of how to approach the marijuana related warrant articles given that the committee is generally tasked with offering financial opinions. The conversation focused on the financial implications of whether or not to support the bylaw change banning the presence of retail sales locations in the town. There were questions of what increased policing and first responder costs might be. With

Maynard's plans to allow retail sales, are we facing the likelihood of an increase in those expenses regardless of whether retail sales are allowed in Acton.

Mike Majors pointed out that we need to keep an eye on unintended consequences in addition to considering the direct tax revenues and costs.

There were several ideas of how to estimate the potential sales tax revenue and the related town expenses from a retail location including:

- Extrapolating potential sales based on package store sales of alcohol
- Looking at economic changes in towns in Colorado where marijuana has an established retail market
- Examining real estate value changes in areas that currently allow the sale of recreational marijuana.

Mike Majors will research potential tax revenue and present his findings at the next committee meeting. He will speak to warrant Article 3.

Tom Farley explained that banks still will not work with marijuana retailers because marijuana is not legal at a federal level.

### **Acton Leadership Group Topics**

#### **Minuteman Debt Exclusion**

Jason Cole reported that the town free cash is \$300k less than was expected and that there is an unexpected \$500k shortfall in the Middlesex retirement fund. The Board of Selectmen has requested consideration of debt exclusion for the Minuteman building project. Current Minuteman debt payments could change because there will be a new bond for the new building. This new Minuteman bond could create a significant change in our payments to the Minuteman district next year. The committee had previously spoken about recommending a warrant article for the next annual town meeting that combines the creation of debt exclusion to fund the Minuteman borrowing in addition to that for the twin school building and the North Acton fire station.

Roland Bourdon stated concern about interest rates rising if we wait longer than the next annual town meeting to get debt exclusion funding for any of these projects. Jason Cole clarified that this is an existing bond with the interest rate already locked in. We are just talking about how to pay for it. Based on his knowledge of the project Mike Majors does not, in fact, expect the town's Minuteman assessment to change very much with the new bonding in spite of previously expressed concerns.

With the increased member town costs from Minuteman building project, concern was expressed that non-member towns were not paying a fair share for sending their students to the school. It was explained that the new Minuteman regional agreement makes it so non-member community students pay more in order to cover the capital maintenance costs. With his more in-depth knowledge of the Minuteman district, Mike Majors supported using debt exclusion and putting it forward this year.

## **Committee Business**

### **Minutes:**

October 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting minutes were approved.

Tom Farley and Jason Cole abstained owing to not having attended that meeting.

### **Committee Reports:**

School Building Committee – Jason Cole

Education plan and PDP were submitted to the MSBA. The twin school site will need to be chosen soon in order to give the MSBA the preferred site by January. Two of the site options would require the town to sell land to the school district.

Board of Selectmen – Tom Farley

The Board of Selectmen voted “No Recommendation” on warrant Article 1 for the Dember 3<sup>rd</sup> Special Town Meeting.

Many members of the public showed up in opposition to the 40B project proposed at 4 Piper Lane. They expressed concerns about the number of units (40), the density of the project, increased traffic that would result, and the look of the proposed houses not fitting in with the historic area. The project is in review by Mass Housing at this time.

### **Schedule:**

Meeting adjourned at 8:40

Respectfully submitted,

Christi Andersen

Finance Committee Clerk