

Minutes of the Acton Finance Committee Meeting September 27, 2011 7:30 pm – Faulkner Room, Acton  
Town Hall

Pursuant to a notice duly posted with the Town Clerk and with a quorum of members present, the Acton Finance Committee convened at 7:30 p.m. on September 27, 2011, to review various matters.

Members Present: Mary Ann Ashton, Maynard Brandon, Patricia Clifford, Bob Evans, Paulina Knibbe, Steve Noone, Clint Seward, and Doug Tindal.

Members Not Present: Bill Mullin

Vice Chairman Tindal called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. In the absence of any public participation, he recognized Mrs. Clifford for a report on Minutes from September 13 which were presented in draft to the committee. Mr. Noone moved approval; Mrs. Ashton seconded the motion which was adopted unanimously, with the exception of Mr. Brandon who abstained.

**Report on 2020 Session:** Mr. Seward commented that while the goals for long term financial stability contained good ideas, there was no cost data, although there was agreement that the data should be developed. Mr. Noone said he urged the group to come up with numbers to help with the prioritization, specifically financial facts defining the amount of money to spend and what elements would cost. Mrs. Clifford commented that the direct correlation between the goals and government functions was vague and needed clarification.

Mr. Tindal distributed a related chart developed by staff categorizing items as revenue positive or negative and asked the committee for review. He requested members mark the document up and return it to him. After discussion, Mrs. Ashton suggested that the request might best be completed with a full discussion at the next Finance Committee meeting so that staff could elaborate on comments.

Ms. Knibbe reminded the Committee that 2020 would have two public meetings in November and March for citizen participation and comment. Mrs. Clifford commented that there should be more public process as the group prepares to present their document to Town Meeting.

**Report on Regional School Committee Meeting:** Mrs. Ashton reported that Don Aicardi presented additional information to the Regional School Committee regarding the potential of exceeding the E&D cap following the release of final state aid allocations. There are three possible solutions to explore: 1) decrease the use of E&D and keep assessments the same; 2) reflect new state aid, keep E&D use the same and lower assessments; and 3) raise E&D spending and lower assessments. The RSC received the report but did not discuss its content; they will consider it on October 6.

The RSC has initiated a review of the Regional Agreement in conjunction with the work of the Regional Study Committee that is exploring regionalizing K-6 with Boxborough. Electronic copies of the Regional Agreement will be forwarded to members of the Finance Committee.

Mr. Seward stated his concern about giving back of assessment money and asked which fiscal year that would impact. Although opinions were offered, there was no clear response. John Petersen, representing the School Committee, indicated that part of the answer involves the disposition of Table 6. Mr. Seward reiterated that he felt any money that could be given back in FY12 would be helpful.

**White Paper Project Updates:** Mr. Tindal confirmed that the committee would meet on Saturday and asked for additional status comments. Mr. Noone reported that the OPEB report was pending further action until updated numbers came in mid-October. The Long Term Financial Strategy group would be the last group to finish in order to incorporate materials developed by other subcommittees. He referred to a model under development that will show a range of possibilities. Mrs. Ashton, a member of the subcommittee, explained that a key difference between this model and the ALG model is the goal to project expenses rather than simply allocate revenues.

During discussion of the long range planning model, Mr. Evans questioned the population figures that were provided by MAPC and the 2020 work, saying that if the committee is doubtful about their validity or provenance it should not use them. Mr. Tindal concurred that there needs to be agreement on assumptions and their attribution should be footnoted. Ms. Knibbe said she would take this reaction back to 2020. Mr. Noone said the subcommittee viewed this model as a first version that would grow more sophisticated over time.

Mr. Seward distributed an updated version of the Capital Plan report responding to Mr. Mullin's memorandum regarding formatting. Ms. Knibbe observed that aggregating the information would provide a helpful compilation to determine funding options. Mr. Evans commented that coordinating paying off with a reduction in tax rates had been considered in the past and not well received. He also observed that a comparison to other towns is interesting but not useful as the ratio of students to the total population varies widely and thereby demands are not the same.

Mrs. Ashton reported that the 12 metrics had been selected and agreed to for that project and would be ready for Saturday.

Mr. Evans referred to the previously circulated report on legal services analyzing in house vs. outside legal services. Mr. Noone described the case in the report as compelling.

**Committee Reports:**

2020 (Seward)	Covered during meeting
CPC (Noone)	Elected Chair for FY 12; approved annual plan
EDC (Tindal)	Continue working on signage issues, delineating historic and nonhistoric needs and requirements; coordinating with HDC
ACHC (Clifford)	Groundbreaking ceremony for Towne Building; 15 units of affordable housing ready in about 12 months
HIT (Evans)	Next meeting to focus on Segal study and issues around plan design and potential savings from having a GIC-like plan. Still great levels of uncertainty in draft report.

**Adjournment:** Upon a motion by Mr. Brandon, seconded by Ms. Knibbe, the committee adjourned at 8:55 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia Clifford,  
Clerk

