

Minutes of the Acton Finance Committee Meeting MAY 24, 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 May 24, 2011, to review various matters

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

Chairman Mullin called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. He welcomed Paulina Knibbe as the newest member of the committee and, in the absence of any public participation, recognized Mr. Tindal and Mrs. Clifford to present Minutes of previous meetings.

Mr. Tindal reported that he and Mrs. Ashton were finalizing three sets of minutes from the time frame surrounding Town Meeting. Mrs. Clifford presented Minutes from the May 10 meeting noting a minor change. Mr. Noone moved approval seconded by Mr. Brandon; the minutes were adopted unanimously, with abstentions by Mrs. Knibbe and Mr. Tindal.

For the benefit of members who were not present during the previous organizational meeting, Mr. Mullin reviewed his expectations for communications, emphasizing the appropriate use of email. He then welcomed Mr. Don Aicardi, school Finance Director, and Mike Coppolino and John Peterson, School Committee members, presenting the FY11 Year End Purchasing Initiative. Mr. Aicardi summarized the School Committee discussions at two meetings in a Power Point presentation; the presentation slides are included for the record as an attachment to these minutes.

Mr. Evans asked about the differential in costs for smart boards for elementary and Jr. High classrooms; Marie Altieri, Director of Personnel for the Schools, explained the amount of infrastructure required to support the boards in the elementary schools is greater and adds to the cost of the hardware.

In response to a question from Mr. Seward concerning the impact of the labor contracts in FY13 and the potential need to set aside funding, Mr. Aicardi submitted that the administration believes that the contracts will result in future savings. He characterized the spending initiative as a balancing effort to take care of current needs as articulated by parents and professional staff and still contribute to the financial reserves.

Mr. Seward also asked if new positions were among the options under consideration. Mr. Aicardi responded that the administration would look at FY12 budgets to see if there are places to wring out savings and would bring any proposals to the School Committees.

The Chairman asked for comments on the impact of these expenditures on the educational experiences of the children and was assured by the School Committee members that as a matter of policy initiatives would not be approved unless they improved the delivery of education.

Mrs. Ashton asked for an update on the School Committees' actions on the proposal. Mr. Peterson reminded that the Committee that once the budget is final the Superintendent can make spending changes within the approved total and stated that the School Committee has affirmed its support of the FY11 initiative. The discussion of additional hiring within the FY 12 budget will be a future discussion.

Mr. Tindal supported the expenditures and asked about training and support for staff; Mr. Peterson affirmed that the educational IT director would implement a rollout plan. Mrs. Clifford asked when the spending would be effective, to which Mr. Aicardi responded that initial paperwork was started.

Mr. Seward asked Mr. Aicardi if the new positions under consideration for FY12 would be consistent with the level service policy agreed to at ALG for FY12 budgets. Mr. Aicardi indicated changes in this policy would include public discussion with the School Committee.

The Chair recognized Richard Calandrella, a member of the public speaking as Vice President of Acton Community Access Television. Mr. Calandrella said that ACAT would be leaving the High School building for new studios in the summer but planned to leave all the necessary equipment for the school to continue to run a studio.

Mrs. Ashton moved the Finance Committee express its support for the Purchasing Initiative and request the Superintendent move ahead with the expenditures. Mrs. Clifford supported the motion which was adopted 8 ayes, 0 noes and 1 abstention (Mr. Seward.)

Mrs. Ashton distributed a handout summarizing the differences in calculations of projected reserve balances she developed as a result of questions raised by Charles Kadlec following Town Meeting. After discussion, the Chair reported he reviewed the calculations with the Assistant Town Manager to reconcile the two viewpoints. He indicated he could schedule a workshop with staff at a future meeting to resolve any concerns and questions and solidify an approach for FY13 budget planning.

The Chair discussed the need to observe the Open Meeting Law as small sub groups meet to consider the projects we are pursuing for the White Paper. It was agreed that efforts should be made to do as much of the qualitative work as possible in a transparent and open manner. The list of project responsibilities and committee observer assignments were completed and will be distributed before the next meeting.

Mr. Seward reminded the committee about the June 23 Public Meeting as part of the 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan. Mr. Evans reported that the HIT was cash flow positive in the recent reporting month.

Mr. Brandon, seconded by Mrs. Ashton, moved adjournment at approximately 9:15.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia Clifford, Clerk

Attachments: PowerPoint Presentation Slides provided by Mr. Aicardi, handout comparing reserve calculations