

Minutes – Acton Finance Committee  
September 8, 2009, 7:30p.m.  
Room 204  
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 8, 2009 to review various matters.

**Members present for the meeting:** Herman Kabakoff, Chair, Mary Ann Ashton, Vice Chair, Pat Clifford, Pat Easterly, Bob Evans, Steve Noone, Kent Sharp, Doug Tindal, Brandy Brandon, Associate Member and Karen Kucala, Fincom Staff Liaison.

Public – Bob Ingram, Xuan Kong, Paul Hoff, Charlie Kadlec, Dick Calandrella, Sharon Smith McManus

Chairman Herman Kabakoff called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and gave an overview of the agenda. He requested public participation, but none was offered.

**Approval of Minutes**

Three sets of minutes were presented for approval. Pat Clifford moved approval of the July 13 minutes, and Steve Noone seconded. Minutes were approved with two abstentions (Easterly, Ashton). Ms. Clifford moved approval of the July 14 minutes, and Mrs. Ashton seconded. Minutes were approved with one abstention (Easterly). Ms. Clifford moved approval of the August 11 minutes, and Mr. Noone seconded. Minutes were approved with one abstention (Sharp).

**Representative to the Solar Panel Submission Review Committee**

Mr. Kabakoff said that John Murray sent a memo asking for a volunteer to participate on the Solar Panel Submission Review Committee (see attached e-mail). Doug Tindal volunteered.

**Solar Panel Memorandum – Doug Tindal**

At a previous meeting members of the Finance Committee had expressed concerns about the issues related to the solar panel warrant article passed at the spring Special Town Meeting. In response, Doug Tindal had offered to draft a memo to the Board of Selectmen outlining those concerns, circulate the draft to Fincom members for comment, and then deliver the completed memo to the Fincom Chair to pass along to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Tindal provided an overview of the memo in its final version.

Kent Sharp expressed concern that “the horse is out of the barn.” Mrs. Ashton urged the Fincom to vote on approving tonight; if people have specific concerns they should send those comments to Mr. Tindal in the next 24 hours. Ms. Clifford thanked Mr. Tindal and agreed that Fincom should approve the memo and send it on to the Board of Selectmen. She noted that sometimes RFPs return no appropriate responses. Mr. Noone moved that the chairman of Fincom transmit the memo to the Board of Selectmen, and that if there are any additional changes those should be forwarded to Mr. Tindal within the next 24 hours. Mr. Tindal seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Kabakoff will send to the BOS with a copy to the Town Manager. Sharon Smith McManus, chair of the Regional School Committee, requested that the document be sent to the Superintendent and the School Committee chairs as well.

### **Representative to the Spencer Tuttle Wastewater Committee**

Mrs. Rosenzweig sent a memo asking for a volunteer (specifically Kent Sharp) to participate on the Spencer Tuttle Wastewater Committee (see attached e-mail). Kent Sharp agreed. Steve Noone asked for clarification regarding the charge to the committee, scope of work, length of time, etc. Kent Sharp says there's a schedule moving forward for about a year to 18 months and a plan for who will be involved. Steve Noone commented additionally that he had appointed Kent to participate in WRAC and told him that this was "not too much work." He was glad that Kent was willing to continue.

### **Committee Input for the ALG Meeting on September 9**

ALG meeting tomorrow morning at 7:15 a.m. Mr. Kabakoff discussed the documents included in the packet and asked for guidance. Mr. Noone said that he is concerned about expenses, especially given the outlook for state funding. Contracts should be held to 0 increase levels. Pat Easterly commented that at the RSC meeting last week there were some discussions about possible reductions. She distributed several documents related to the SC discussion from last week. Bob Evans agreed that increases in budget should be 0. He said that citizens in Acton, having the same or less money to spend in 2010 as in 2009, will expect government spending to be similar.

Mr. Kabakoff noted the agenda item relating to the 97 percent solution, and asked committee members for advice about his comments. Ms. Clifford referenced Bill Mullin's comments to the Regional School Committee the prior week: this was a proactive piece of advice before the fiscal year began – the longer you wait the more difficult it will become. Mrs. Easterly said that it is important that Fincom convey the opinion that we are looking for costs to be lower, and that we would like to hear from the committees about what they're doing to lower the costs. She would like to see that trend continued without a specific number/percentage. Mr. Tindal would like to see savings in the contracts.

### **Committee Discussion Regarding Subjects for Future Agendas**

Mr. Kabakoff introduced the idea that the Board of Selectmen, town staff and School Committees, school staff should come to discuss their planning for FY11 budgets: what are their priorities, how are they approaching budgets, what is the timeline for decisions. Ms. Clifford supported Mr. Kabakoff's suggestion. Mrs. Easterly emphasized that this was an opportunity for the committees to come talk about what they are doing to reduce expenses in FY10, and what they're thinking about in planning budgets for FY11. Mr. Kabakoff will contact the boards, staff to schedule for the next two meetings on September 22 and October 13.

### **Committee Reports**

Mrs. Ashton reported on progress from the cost savings subcommittee, and reported on her attendance at a statewide regionalization conference, sponsored by the Division of Local Services. Mr. Kabakoff reminded committee members that they should be working on their budget driver research, and should also let him know who is interested in attending the Association of Town Finance Committees seminar in October.

Mr. Sharp moved to adjourn (seconded by Clifford) and the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Ann Ashton, Vice Chairman.