



Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 26, 2019
7:30 PM
Town Hall Room 204

Present: Jason Cole, Roland Bourdon, Christi Andersen, Mike Majors, Steve Noone, Jeff Bergart, Tom Farley, Christine Russell, Al Vlajinac (associate)

Absent: Dave Wellinghoff and Sahana Purohit (associate)

1. Opening

Chair Jason Cole opened the meeting at 7:32 p.m.

The meeting was recorded by Acton TV.

2. Public Participation

Terra Friedrichs asked that the committee take no position on the Kelley's Corner article and no position on the Central Street pocket park. She would also like the committee to take no position on the sewer enterprise budget request because of its inclusion of a survey for the potential of adding sewer service to West Acton. She said that businesses and few residents there want it.

Regarding the citizens petition warrant article to limit development, she put forward that it is time to plan for public services such as water usage that are not currently taken into account when new houses are permitted. She believes that this will increase the value of existing homes.

Regarding the citizen's petition to limit the percent of land clearing in a lot, she pointed out that this would be a bylaw change. Current lots would not be grandfather-able meaning that the rules would apply to them. Developers she has spoken to say that limiting clearing would increase the value of surrounding lots and cause a minimal decrease in the value of the lot being partially cleared.

3. Public Hearing on FY20 Budget

Jason Cole presented the town budget. The proposed total budget for Fiscal Year 2020 is \$98,554,827. This is an increase of \$2,704.032 or a 2.8% increase over the Fiscal Year 2019 budget.



The town operating budget is up by \$909,174 or 2.7%. Subsidies decreased by \$38,654 or 8% and capital increased \$425,997 or 171.1%. Bringing the total increase in the Town budget to \$1,296,517 or 3.8%.

The total operating budget for the Acton Boxborough School District increased by \$2,260,619 or 2.6%. After accounting for the school district's revenue, reserve use, and cost shifts per the regional agreement; Acton's assessment increases by \$1,255,647 or 2.1%.

The Minuteman assessment increased by \$151,868 or 11% ; due to the inclusion of \$102,156 for the debt service for the new building.

The increases in the budget will be met with the following revenue:

| | | FY 20 Revenue Increase |
|-------------------|--|------------------------|
| Prop. 2.5% | | \$ 2,108,000 |
| Untaxed Levy | | \$ 454,000 |
| New growth | | \$ 750,000 |
| Inc. Local Rec. | | \$ 52,000 |
| Inc. In State Aid | | \$ 13,000 |
| Other | | \$ 6,244 |
| Dec. in Res. Use | | \$ (679,212) |
| | | \$ 2,704,032 |

As a result, the average single family tax bill will increase by 3.78% to \$11,745.

4. Warrant Article Discussion

There will be another meeting next Tuesday, March 5th, to review articles that are not spoken to today.

Names after the articles indicate the committee member who was assigned to research the article.

1. Choose Town Officers - not committee opinion is required
2. Hear and Accept Reports - no committee opinion is required
3. Budget Transfer - no committee opinion is required
4. Town Operating Budget - Jason Cole



See the numbers above read in the budget hearing.

A motion to recommend the operating budget of \$35,186,539 was made by Tom Farley and seconded by Christine Russell.

The motion was then withdrawn because the budget being voted on should only be the operating budget. It should not include the subsidies that were accidentally quoted in the motion.

A new motion was made by Steve Noone to recommend the town operating budget of \$34,746,539. Jeff Bergart seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Kelley's Corner Supplemental Engineering and Appraisal Services - Christi Andersen

The specific breakout of supplemental engineering cost and the cost of appraisal services were not provided in the draft article. The total being requested was confirmed as being correct.

A motion was made by Steve Noone to recommend the total request for \$525,000 as listed in article. It was seconded by Roland Bourdon. Jason Cole voted against the motion. The rest of the committee, Roland Bourdon, Christi Andersen, Mike Majors, Steve Noone, Jeff Bergart, Tom Farley, and Christine Russell, voted for the motion. It passed 7-1.

6. Sidewalks and Traffic Calming for areas other than Kelley's Corner - Christine Russell

As there was not enough detail present in the draft of the warrant, the article was moved to the following meeting for review.

Jason Cole postponed review of the following three articles until after the March 5th meeting at which the school administration would be presenting.

7. Acton-Boxborough Regional School District Assessment- Christine Russell

8. Acton-Boxborough Regional School District Capital (bonding) - Jason Cole

9. Acton-Boxborough Regional School District Stabilization Fund - Christi Andersen



10. Minuteman Regional School District Assessment- Mike Majors

There was no discussion given the many previous discussions the committee had about this project.

Mike Majors moved to recommend the assessment of \$1,455,682 for the Minuteman Regional School District. Roland Bourdon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

11. Community Preservation Program: Direct Appropriations from Fund Balances- Roland Bourdon

The Community Preservation Committee had not decided yet what to fund and at what level. The committee had been invited to present. Roland Bourdon will check if they can make the next meeting.

12. Disposition of Real Property: 348-364 Main Street - Mike Majors

The proposal is to use the property for senior housing sponsored by the Acton Housing Authority (AHA). This plan was approved by BoS. The town would not get money back for the property. Research into other ideas for the lot showed that they were unfeasible for business uses. While there was an option to sell the property to a developer for \$1.8 million, seniors were very active attendees of the meetings and worked hard to get the decision. The AHA project will result in the town not receiving property taxes of approximately \$200,000 per year.

Mike Majors proposed that it is in the town's best interest to approve this plan.

Steve Noone pointed out that the town paid \$1.8 million. While the AHA will pay \$1 million to the town, that money comes from Community Preservation Committee which Acton tax payers have put money into as part of their tax bills. With the AHA owning it, we won't get any future taxes from that property. This plan removes any value the town might get from it ever. There is also an opportunity cost of what the CPC could have done with that money instead.

Roland Bourdon expressed concern that this would set a precedent for the town purchasing land to protect it from one kind of development and then never getting the purchase price back but instead using the land in a way that makes it no longer possible. Tax revenue losses for future properties like this should be considered.



Given the lack of actual information in the draft article, a vote was pushed to the next meeting.

13. Land Acquisition or Lease: 19 & 21 Maple Street - Jeff Bergart

The land is currently privately owned and illegally being rented out as parking spots for the nearby South Acton Train Station. The town is negotiating with the owner over whether the town would lease or purchase the land for use as parking. Further information is needed before the committee can give a recommendation.

14. Land Acquisition: 257 Central Street - Jeff Bergart

The lot has been subdivided and is under contract with a developer who would like to put a house on it. Some citizens have expressed a desire to create a park and use the space as part of the farmer's market.

The cost of acquiring this lot is unknown. The committee pushed off giving a recommendation until the next meeting in the hope that further information will be available.

15. Fund Collective Bargaining Agreements: Police Patrol, Police Superior Officers, Dispatch, AFSCME, Fire - Steve Noone

The Public Safety Dispatchers union (International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 25) is the only union with an agreement to be approved at this time. This contract applies to 12 people. It provides a 2% salary increase over each of the 3 years that the contract is in effect. The cost impact the first year is \$9,435.

Steve Noone moved to recommend section C pertaining to the contract with Public Safety Dispatchers (International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 25) union. Roland Bourdon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

16. Demand Fees for Late Payments (MGL c.60 s.15) - Steve Noone

The fees have been \$5 for at least the past 27 years. This is a long overdue proposed increase to \$15. The current fee is low compared to other communities. The change will primarily impact vehicle excise tax bills. The town estimates that they will receive \$32,000 more from this change.

It was noted that we should review this fee in 5 years for potential adjustment.



Steve Noon moved to recommend the article to increase late fees. Roland Bourdon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

17. Commuter Lot & Station Maintenance - Dave Wellinghoff

Dave Wellinghoff was not present, so the review was postponed until the next meeting.

18. Septage Disposal Enterprise Budget - Dave Wellinghoff

Dave Wellinghoff was not present, so the review was postponed until the next meeting.

19. Transfer Station and Recycling Enterprise Budget - Tom Farley

The budget is funded entirely by user fees. The revenues equal the expenses. The proposed budget is flat from previous year.

Tom Farley moved to recommend this article. Roland Bourdon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

20. Sewer Enterprise Budget - Dave Wellinghoff

Dave Wellinghoff was not present, so the review was postponed until the next meeting.

21. Ambulance Enterprise Budget - Christine Russell

Given that the motion did not include the revenue source numbers, review of this article was pushed to the next meeting.

22. Transportation Enterprise Budget - Christi Andersen

Given that the motion did not include the revenue source numbers, review of this article was pushed to the next meeting.

23. Revolving Fund Budgets - Tom Farley

These budgets are self-financed.



Tom Farley moved to recommend the article. Steve Noone seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

24. Accept Legislation: Agricultural Commission (MGL c.40 s.8L) - Sahana Purohit

Sahana Purohit was not present, so the review was postponed until the next meeting.

25. Amend General Bylaws: Right to Farm - Sahana Purohit

Sahana Purohit was not present, so the review was postponed until the next meeting.

26. Amend General Bylaws: Chapter N, Demolition Delay - Mike Majors

Mike Majors was still researching this article. Its review was pushed to the next meeting.

27. Amend General Bylaws: Public Way Permits - Jeff Bergart

The Board of Selectmen only meet twice a month. The town needs a way to issue permits more quickly than that schedule allows. This change would allow the Engineering Department to issue these permits. Appeals could be made to the Board of Selectmen.

Jeff Bergart moved to recommend the article. Steve Noone seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

28. Amend Town Charter: Planning Board Membership - Roland Bourdon

This motion would decrease Planning Board membership to 5 members from 7. The decrease is proposed because it is hard to get members for the board. This change would make it easier to get a quorum to make decisions. If this article passes at town meeting, there would be a vote at the next annual election in order to finalize approval of the change.

Christine Russell moved to make no recommendation. Christi Andersen seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-1. Jason was the sole nay based on this belief that the committee should make a recommendation on every article.

29. Amend Zoning Bylaw: Detached Accessory Apartments - Dave Wellinghoff



Dave Wellinghoff was not present, so the review was postponed until the next meeting.

30. Amend Zoning Bylaw: Accessory Apartments - Dave Wellinghoff

Dave Wellinghoff was not present, so the review was postponed until the next meeting.

Town member Terra Friedrichs pointed out that the special permit process should be required to work with neighbors. She stated that the size area should be decreased on the floor at town meeting to match the 500sf in the previous article.

31. Amend General Bylaws: Plastic Bag Reduction - Christine Russell

This citizen's petition proposes to ban single use thin film plastic checkout bags. Paper and reusable bags are much less effective than single use plastic bags in terms of contribution to global warming. Because of the non-renewable resources used in their production, they are actually more environmentally harmful. An examination of the results of a similar ban in California has shown that a ban without a corresponding surcharge on paper bag usage only shifted people to using paper bags rather than moving people to the stated goal of increasing the use of reusable bags.

There is an added cost to retail stores for switching to paper bags. The bags cost approximately 10 time more than plastic bags and take up significantly more storage space to have on hand.

Tom Farley noted out that plastic grocery bags are often reused in homes.

Christine Russell made a motion to not recommend this article. Roland Bourdon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

32. Non-Binding Resolution: Building Moratorium - Mike Majors 32

Town member Terra Friedrichs supports the idea of this citizen's petition to give guidance to the Planning Department, Planning Board, and Board of Selectmen to plan for general use of town resources from development. She would like for them to have time to analyze whether we are building beyond our water independence. This moratorium would give us time to look at the larger picture.

Jeff Bergart argued that development keeps our taxes lower because growth covers the



increase in expenses. We would expect tax bills to grow more if the town stops allowing development. Also, the town would only have rich people because housing would become a more scarce resource thereby driving up prices.

There was concern that the 5 year time frame for the moratorium is not a temporary ban. Mike Majors thought that the language was too vague and that there would be legal problems with current landowners who want to develop their properties.

Christi Andersen made a motion to make no recommendation. There was no second.

Roland Bourdon made a motion to not recommend the article. Tom Farley seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-1-1 with the support of Jason Cole, Roland Bourdon, Mike Majors, Jeff Bergart, Tom Farley, and Christine Russell. Christi Andersen voted Nay. Steve Noone abstained.

33. Non-Binding Resolution: Development Rate Limitation Bylaw - Jason Cole - 33

Mike Majors was concerned that limiting the development rate as written in the article would illegally take away the rights of landowners.

Jason Cole and Steve Noone supported the idea of allowing more time for the town to analyze the cost of development on limited resources, but both thought the language was too vague to be effective.

Steve Noone made a motion to not recommend the article. Roland Bourdon seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-1 with support from Jason Cole, Roland Bourdon, Mike Majors, Steve Noone, Jeff Bergart, Tom Farley, and Christine Russell. Christi Andersen voted Nay.

34. Non-Binding Resolution: Land Clearing Limits - Jason Cole - 34

As with the previous article, there was concern about lawsuits from landowners who could not develop their whole lots.

Jeff Bergart and Steve Noone pointed out that there are similar limitations in place for lakefront properties to protect the water quality. While we do need to protect the ground water supply in the town, the language of this article will not do that.

Town member Danny Factor recommended support for the article. He said that it would help climate change to protect the nature. He told the committee that climate



change is an issue now, so this conversation needs to happen now.

Christine Russell made a motion to make no recommendation. The motion was seconded by Roland Bourdon. The article passed 5-3 with support from Steve Noone, Christine Russell, Jeff Bergart, Tom Farley, and Roland Bourdon. Jason Cole, Christi Andersen, and Mike Majors voted nay.

35. Non-Binding Resolution: Limit Size of New Single Family Houses - Jason Cole

Town member Terra Friedrichs recommends support of the article as it limits general usage of resources based on house size.

There are currently dozens of houses above this size with a few more built a year. Jason Cole stated that if the lot is large enough to support the house, then it should be allowed.

Mike Majors moved to not recommend the article. Tom Farley seconded the motion. The article passed 6-2 with the support of Jason Cole, Roland Bourdon, Mike Majors, Jeff Bergart, Tom Farley, and Christine Russell. Christi Andersen and Steve Noone voted nay.

36. Non-Binding Resolution: Do Not Add Turning Lanes at Route 111 and Route 27 - Jason Cole

Town member Terra Friedrichs voiced concerns that the additional turning lanes make it easier to put a large development on the Kmart parcel. She put forward that the carbon footprint of the intersection is not changed because more cars go through and that the speeds through the intersection would increase. She also said that traffic islands are not safer. She does not disagree with the idea of Kelley's Corner but believes that people want something different than improved traffic flow.

Steve Noone moved to not recommend this article. Roland Bourdon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

37. Non-Binding Resolution: Register Intent to Purchase the Kmart Parcels - Jason Cole

Town member Terra Friedrichs would like the town to register intent to buy the lot in order to stop a developer from being able to start a 40B project there. Jason Cole agreed with not wanting a residential development there and planned to talk with town council on whether this move would be sufficient.



Christine Russell pointed out that it is the committee's point of view that the town should not buy new land. Christi Andersen pointed out that the appraised value of \$7 million is well beyond what the town could afford.

Further review of the article was pushed to the next meeting.

The following articles were pushed to the next meeting for review.

38. Remove Deed Restriction 670 Massachusetts Avenue - Roland Bourdon
39. Amend General Bylaws: Storm Water - Dave Wellinghoff
40. Amend Zoning Bylaw: Storm Water - Dave Wellinghoff
41. Amend Zoning Map: 16 Knox Trail and 585 Main Street - Steve Noone
42. Amend Zoning Bylaw: Housekeeping - Jeff Bergart
43. Accept Street: Brabrook Road - Tom Farley
44. Accept Land Gift: 49 Piper Road - Christine Russell
45. Relocate Trail Easement: Guggins Brook - Roland Bourdon
46. Authorize Selectmen to Accept Easements - Al Vlajinac
47. Highway Reimbursement Program (Chapter 90) - Steve Noone
48. Insurance Proceeds - Steve Noone
49. Gifts or Grants - Christi Andersen
50. Federal and State Reimbursement Aid - Christi Andersen
51. Performance Bonds - Al Vlajinac
52. Sale of Foreclosed Properties - Jeff Bergart



5. Regular Business

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes –

- a. The meeting minutes from the Finance Committee's February 15th, 2019 meeting were reviewed and approved.

The motion to approve those minutes was made by Christine Russell and seconded by Steve Noone. The motion passed 6-0-2 with abstentions from Tom Farley and Roland Bourdon.

B. Committee Reports

a. Minuteman High School Building Project- Mike Majors

The project continues to be on schedule and under budget. The building goes on permanent power Thursday, February 28th. By July 25th, it will be substantially complete. It will be ready for students to start using it on September 2.

b. CPC - Roland Bourdon

At the meeting last week, the town manager gave a presentation on stabilizing the Asa Parlin house at the cost of \$175k. The Historic District Commission previously did not give permission for demolition because it is a historic building. This plan is to remove newer parts to help stop from falling down, thereby not effecting the historic parts to house. The Board of Selectmen support this plan.

C. Point of View Outreach Update

Sunday, Steve and Sahana will presenting to the Chinese Community.

6. Adjournment

At 10:24 p.m., it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

Draft Minutes from February 15th meeting

Petition to Ban Plastic Bags

Draft Warrant 2019 v06

Citizen Land Use Petition Handouts from Terra Friedrichs