

Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes
April 1, 2020
7:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

Present: Christi Andersen, Roland Bourdon, Jason Cole, Mike Majors, Alan Nolde (Associate), Steve Noone, Sahana Purohit, Christine Russell, Dave Wellinghoff

Absent: Tom Farley, Al Vlajinac (Associate)

1. Opening

Chair Roland Bourdon called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. The Finance Committee Members and audience attended the meeting remotely through Zoom.us virtual meeting platform. The meeting was recorded through Zoom and also by ActonTV.

2. Public Participation

Audience members were given the opportunity to participate remotely, but there was no public participation.

3. COVID-19 Pandemic

The Finance Committee discussed the COVID-19 pandemic and the possible financial impacts to the Town and Schools. Finance Director Steve Barrett and Assistant Finance Director Brian McMullen participated in the conversation.

- A concern was raised over how this situation was affecting local economy
 - Taxpayers hurting namely the elderly, retirees, and local businesses
 - Local company Affirm was recently bought out which may take hundreds of jobs out of Town.
 - Need strategies to get local economy going once all clear is given
 - Local Sales Tax?
 - Spend some money promoting local restaurants and retail shops?
 - Tax deferral for local landlords of commercial property?
 - Add drive-thru to current Town Meeting Warrant for pharmacies and restaurants?
 - Local receipts are trending right where they should be for the 3rd quarter.
 - MV Excise Commitment 2 going out soon.
 - May slow down purchases of new cars and thus new car excise tax receipts
 - RE tax due date has been pushed back to 6/1, so it's too soon to have figures on the 4th quarter.
 - Escrow companies have been requested to send payment by original 5/1 due date.
 - Lenders more on top of delinquent taxes now than in the past
- Concerns were also raised about the future economy of Acton

- As in the past it may take a year or two for property valuations to dip
- Acton was not hit as hard as other local communities by previous recession
- Both Town and School should try to adjust next year's budget based off of expected deviations from pandemic.
- Town Manager has cut any unnecessary expenditures. Only allowing those related to COVID-19.
- Nursing Services is running fine per Selectman Jon Benson.
 - More info can be found in most recent episode of Java with John.
 - Sahana Purohit will address questions about volunteer training directly to Heather York.
- North Acton Fire Station bonding was scheduled to happen on March 23rd but did not happen due to market volatility.
 - Steve Barrett will look into how long the authority to borrow for the project is good for and if it will impact the build start date.
 - Plan to hit bond market in next 2 months or get a short term bridge over June 30th.

4. Kelley's Corner/Kmart Property and Piper Lane ZBA Hearing Update

Board of Selectman Member Jon Benson gave FinCom an update on Kelley's Corner in particular the former Kmart property and provided an update on Piper Rd.

Kelley's Corner

- State will pick up \$334,000 of land acquisition costs, so Town Meeting request lowered from \$1,200,000 to \$800,000.
- Don't plan on borrowing full amount right away, just what is needed. Any unused amounts, such as unused contingency funds, can be rescinded by another Town Meeting vote.
- COVID-19 has limited presentation options for the project. Will use email, Facebook, and ActonTV as outlets.

Kmart Property

- Nothing changed since update given at March 24th Board of Selectman meeting.
- Prospective buyer, who is a local business owner, is still in negotiations with Stop & Shop.
- Do not know what type of business it will be. Stop & Shop will put restrictions on sale of food, limited by zoning, not mixed-use, Town leadership unlikely to support 40B as we near safe harbor
- May hold a community forum after sale goes through.

Piper Lane

- 2 parcels involved in the project. A developer offered to buy both parcels subject to obtaining a comprehensive permit for a 40B project.
- Town and South Acton Neighborhood Association both object to the project.
- Developer was able to obtain a project eligibility letter from Mass Housing because even though the Town was projected to reach 40B safe harbor, at the time of his application it had not yet done so.

Issues with the project:

- Sight lines
- Traffic Studies
- Soil testing revealed arsenic and lead in excess of state guidelines
- Emergency access on one lane roads in and out of the property
- Will impact Great Hills Conservation Land

Future of project:

- Hearing to resume on May 5th.
- ZBA could issue a comprehensive permit
- ZBA could issue a comprehensive permit with conditions
 - Conditions could not be so unattainable as to prevent the project
- ZBA could deny the comprehensive permit
 - Must be fact-based. Examples: a grave environmental impact or public safety issue.
 - Developer could appeal to Housing Appeals Committee
- Board of Selectmen to meet in Executive Session to discuss their next steps

5. Finance Committee Business

A. Approval of meeting minutes

The meeting minutes of February 11th were reviewed and approved unanimously. Roll call: Christi Andersen - Aye, Roland Bourdon - Aye, Jason Cole - Aye, Mike Majors - Aye, Steve Noone - Aye, Sahana Purohit - Aye, Christine Russell - Aye, Dave Wellinghoff – Aye.

The meeting minutes of February 25th were also reviewed and approved with 7 ayes and 1 abstention. Roll call:

Christi Andersen - Aye, Roland Bourdon - Aye, Jason Cole - Abstain, Mike Majors - Aye, Steve Noone - Aye, Sahana Purohit - Aye, Christine Russell - Aye, Dave Wellinghoff – Aye.

B. Committee Liaison Reports

Christine Russell gave an update on the last School Committee meeting.

5. Adjournment

At 8:42 pm, a motion was made by Associate Member Adam Nolde and seconded by Steve Noone to adjourn the meeting. A roll call of the vote to adjourn was taken:

Christi Andersen - Aye, Roland Bourdon - Aye, Jason Cole - Aye, Mike Majors - Aye, Steve Noone - Aye, Sahana Purohit - Aye, Christine Russell - Aye, Dave Wellinghoff – Nay.

The meeting was adjourned by majority vote.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

Meeting Minutes of February 11th

Meeting Minutes of February 25th

Respectfully submitted,

Finance Committee