

ALG Minutes, August 10, 2020 Via ZOOM, 8:30 AM

Present: Bart Wendell, facilitator; Jon Benson and Dean Charter, BoS; John Petersen and Amy Krishnamurthy, SC; Christi Andersen and Christine Russell, FC; John Mangiaratti, Peter Light, Steve Barrett and Marie Altieri, staff. {attendees listening in: Jason Cole and Sahana Purohit, FC, and Theresa?}

Additional information/ Documents: Agenda; draft minutes from June 4, 2020; ALG model

Bart noted that the first meeting of a new ALG year starts with a review of the ALG Charter and ground rules. He was not clear if the school committee had their members for the year. He asked if the new members knew everyone around the table. New member, Christine Russell knew everyone but Bart. Bart explained how he got to the position of facilitator and why the ALG exists. At the next meeting the group will review the Charter and ground rules.

Regular Business

1. Minutes were accepted with corrections to the spelling of "Christi"

Special Business

2. **FY 20 update**

Steve: we are finishing up operations we put a hold on spending, except for COVID related items; suspended hiring; every municipal department had turn backs totaling \$1.4M; for a \$36M budget that's 3.08%; DOR target was 3%.

On the revenue side we have three pieces: property taxes \$90M which is 88.8% of the budget with a collection rate of 99.2% which gives us a AAA bond rating. State aid is \$1.6M

John Petersen questioned the snow and ice account. Ans: \$180-\$188K turn-back.

Peter: We are in the process of closing; there will be a report for the Aug. 27 SC meeting. We have "shut-down" savings in transportation, utilities, no overtime, We had a \$600K deficit last year which we have closed, adding several \$100K to E&D.

Marie: It's the revolving accounts that are in trouble; we've lost the revenues for the lunch program, Community Ed, athletic programs; the fund balances are low.

John P.: we have to look at the revolving accts. In total; do we use operating revenues? E&D? How do the circuit breakers help? We need to understand the role of revolving funds and discuss them as part of the revenues this year.

3. **FY21 update**

Peter L: we're still developing plans. We're working on the hybrid plan for opening; there will be significant budgetary impacts, such as more technology. We've eliminated \$800K for full day kindergarten; we anticipate that we'll have more details later. We got \$115K from a federal ESSER grant for chrome books; we are still waiting for grant numbers from FEMA. We are hoping to get \$1.2m additional from the CARES act but we have to be careful to stay within the guidelines and not go beyond what the budget will allow.

Steve: On July 9th we got guidance for FY 21. We still have the hiring freeze (but it has to be lifted); we have had no payroll increases; public safety costs have been for COVID; State aid is level funded; local receipts are level funded; chapter 70 also level. The August 1st tax bill is always an anomaly because the real estate transactions have not yet caught up. With all of that by Aug 7th we had a 91% collection rate and I expect we'll catch up by the end of the month to the regular 97.61% collection rate.

There was a general discussion on the use of the CARES funds and how they will be distributed. Jon Benson noted that there are strict guidelines that must be followed. John P. just wants to make sure that the town/schools get all the funds that are due.

Bart suggested that the use of the CARES funds be part of the ALG agenda.

John M. noted that there have been extra expenses for the running of Town Meeting; Zoom coordinator for all the meetings; rental assistance program of \$60K to date; we have 75% return from FEMA and we are running a tab for Overtime emergencies and PPE; reopening will incur expenses that should be covered by CARES.

Peter noted that there are also the expenses from Boxboro.

The major concern is that the CARES money will be spent and there will still be COVID related expenses that were not covered.

***It was agreed that the discussion on the use(s) of the CARES funds needs to be a part of the September agenda.

4. Review of Multi-year plan

Steve: Nothing much has been changed except rolling back costs and aid to the FY 20 levels.

Christi: when can the FC get the real numbers since these are not near the reality

Marie: what's not near reality?

Christi: we do not have the projections for the future years. Normally we have the Town and School numbers in Sept/Oct and the state numbers so we can do a preliminary budget review.

John M: We are keeping to the budget timeline

Marie: this is tricky trying to follow the outside money sources. We are working closely with the staff to minimize the costs; CARES; we have retirement numbers and the state has yet to pass a budget.

John P: we will be hard pressed to predict the estimates for the revenues; we need instead to come to a consensus on the revenue assumptions.

Marie: we have a freeze for this year and have Ch. 70 as flat, but that could go down---we just do not know. And we definitely do not know what's going to happen in FY22.

Steve: For Minuteman we need to get a better idea of the costs for the future years. There has been a spike in enrollment for Acton students; as part of our moving forward we need to know the MM assessments for FY22 & 23 so we can put it on the worksheet..

Marie: I'll look at MM from our end. It seems that as many freshmen are enrolling as there are seniors and juniors.

John P: more students means more money. "We can't do" anything about that but we need to get out in front and see what's happening so we can know what to expect. We need to have

Pam Nourse meet with the school committee and we need to put more pressure on MMSC to be more realistic.

Bart: Is there something specific ALG needs to do?

John M: MM is not town or schools I'm not sure what sort of controls we can use but we need to start the conversation by speaking with Pam.

There was a discussion about the enrollment numbers. The exact total was not clear.

Bart: Do I sense there is an urgency in the group to have a meeting with Pam? So what's the next step?

Christi wanted to have Pam meet with the FC so they could understand the increase in the numbers "If we can't do anything, we should pull our kids out of MM and send them to a different vocational school"

Bart: is that a possibility.

JP: the concern is financial---we need to have the non-enrollment cost increases explained. ; the per pupil costs are way out of line [with those of ABRHS]

5. School building update

Marie: It's moving along. The BOH agreed to the new placement for the septic tank; a large number of Gates students have chosen to learn remotely; there will be 215 in the building in two cohorts of 110; early bids are favorable; the steel is \$2m under budget; construction costs seem OK; we purchased a modular. We have torn down a wind of the Gates which will remove the kindergarten classrooms.

There are major improvements on Charter Road (some have to do with the Kelley's corner improvements other is the AWD replacing pipes.

Christine Russell: are the septic changes costing more?

Marie: Yes, but the additional \$100K will be covered by the savings on the steel. Everything is on budget.

6. Special Town Meeting

Jon: the date will be September 8th it needs to be before September 30 for the purchase of the Piper road parcels.

JP: can we talk about Charter changes and consider moving Acton's election dates to coincide with those in Boxboro?

Jon: this is a very targeted charter change just to change the Board of Selectmen to Select Board.

Dean suggested that if John wanted such changes that he write it up and he'd take them to the Acton BoS for discussion but nothing could happen at this STM.

7. North Acton Fire station

John M: We have opened the bids and hit the budget. We will be awarding the contracts this week. The BoS has said the project is to go forward.

8. Schedule:

Bart: John M has agreed to do the scheduling for the future ALG meetings. We used to meet at 7:30 AM but it appears that people like 8:30 better.

Amy requested that the ALG not meet on the same day as the school committees evening meetings.

John said that he would send around the schedule for review after 09/14

Bart: the next meeting will be on September 24th at 8:30 AM via Zoom. Before the next meeting I will send around the ALG Charter and ground rules.

9. Public ---there was no public.

10. Adjourned 9:56

Ann Chang