

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

June 3, 2025

Acton Town Hall, Room 204

Present: Scott Sullivan (Chair), Alex Lenz, Jason Cole, Corinne Hogseth, Roland Bourdon, Christi Andersen, Greg Jarboe, Allison Jones

Mr. Sullivan called the meeting to order at 7:30pm

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PRIOR MEETINGS:

None.

Ms. Fleckner asked Mr. Cole if he is missing any Meeting Minutes. Mr. Cole will communicate to Ms. Fleckner if he is missing any and Ms. Fleckner will resend.

III. TOPIC 1: COMMUNICATION

“No days off”, meaning FinCom shouldn’t take time off during the summer.

Regular dialogue with town leaders, boards, committees and active members of the community to ensure all perspectives are being heard. Summer is a critical window of opportunity. Liaisons assignments are a great way to front-load engagement and communication.

Mr. Lenz agreed to this approach.

IV. ASSIGNMENT OF LIAISONS:

Mr. Sullivan recommends assigning 2 Liaisons to the following Boards/Committees. It will give two perspectives and a tag team effort in meeting attendance:

Acton Leadership Group (ALG), Acton Boxborough Regional School Committee, Community Preservation Committee and Select Board.

Mr. Bourdon recommends CPC doesn’t need 2 people.

Mr. Cole suggests a place holder on the calendar in Feb/March to reach out to the Chair of CPC to present to the FinCom to be prepared for Town Meeting.

Mr. Jarboe inquired about a Stormwater Committee; discussion ensued to add the WRAC, (Water Resource Advisory Committee).

Mr. Lenz inquired what is the definition, the role of a Liaison?

Mr. Jarboe gave thoughts on his role with the DPW Facility Committee, that communication is key.

With the Economic Development Committee, the Strategic Economic Development Plan will be key to read and communicate out to other parties.

Mr. Cole commented that some Liaison positions have a voting assignment.

Mr. Cole commented one of the most important Committees is ALG.

ABRSC:

Mr. Sullivan commented there is full disclosure on the town side regarding the budget, and is looking for the same from the School. Mr. Sullivan requested Ms. Andersen and Mr. Cole; Mr. Cole declined. Mr. Sullivan then asked Mr. Jarboe to consider. Mr. Jarboe would consider as long as other assignments are assigned to another FinCom member.

Mr. Cole will take on the Economic Development Committee (EDC).

Ms. Andersen accepted the ABRSC Liaison assignment.

Select Board:

Mr. Sullivan opened the conversation up to who is interested.

Ms. Hogseth offered and it was accepted.

Ms. Jones is not sure she has the time to be a Liaison.

Mr. Lenz doesn't believe he has the capacity or time at this point to be a Liaison.

Mr. Sullivan will be the second Liaison.

CPC:

Mr. Bourdon

Conservation Commission:

Mr. Lenz

Water District Commission:

Ms. Jones

EDC:

Mr. Cole

DPW Building Committee:

Mr. Jarboe

Memorial Library Trustees:

Mr. Lenz

School Budget Subcommittee:

Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Andersen

Strategic Reorganization Committee:

Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Andersen

School Capital Improvement Committee:
Mr. Cole

Planning Board:
Mr. Cole

Zoning Board of Appeals:
Ms. Jones

Mr. Martin commented FinCom may not have to have a Liaison to the ZBA.

Also, Mr. Martin commented the Recreation Commission has no financial budget responsibilities, as Recreation is 100% self-funded other than requesting CPC-funded projects.

Mr. Sullivan will take a pause, follow-up with FinCom members regarding all other Liaison assignments that weren't covered at this meeting and will revisit at next FinCom meeting.

V. INTERNS:

FinCom currently has 10 unpaid Interns for the summer. Objective is to align with their college course work with the setting of Public/Town finance. This opportunity was posted on Facebook, all Interns were accepted. Interns seeking a Finance or related field degree. Each intern will choose a project(s) and present at the end of their 8-10 week program. Benefit to FinCom: a youthful look at town issues and challenges to gain different perspectives. Mr. Sullivan met with every Intern and asked each one what they are most interested in and what job skills they want to hone in on.

Ian, an Intern, introduced himself as one of the Interns. He just completed his Sophomore year at Colgate as a Mathematical Economics major.

Project ideas:

Mr. Lenz - Scenario modeling and financial forecasting. Start with basics, extrapolate that out, then zoom in on a particular subject.

Mr. Cole - what is the Optimum number of Firefighters and Police Officers.

Mr. Cole - If revenues go up 3% and fixed costs are X, Y and Z, what is left?

Mr. Cole - What is optimum dollars spent year-to-year to maintain Wastewater resources/needs without taking out a bond.

Ms. Hogseth - What are the School cost drivers? Compare to inflation over past 10 years. Compare to enrollment. In summary, a set of reference points that can be quickly brought up, our data compared to other towns.

Ms. Andersen commented have to take into consideration the cost of high needs students.

Mr. Bourdon - The Water Resource Advisory Committee (WRAC). What is on their agenda that needs to be immediately done? Priority 1 -3 years up to 10 years? What is the economic trade-off?

Mr. Bourdon - What is the right number of EMT's, looking at our population.

Ms. Andersen - Cost of Maintenance of buildings, roadways and sidewalks. Effect of Heavy rains and our stormwater system.

To Ms. Andersen's comment, Mr. Cole - How close to having water hook-ups denied?

Mr. Sullivan - What is the effect if town eliminates property tax for residents 65 and older.

Mr. Lenz - What is the impact of losing all grant funding.

Mr. Cole - 5-10-year look-back of housing turnover and effect of School enrollment.

Mr. Cole thanked the town for paring out Single Family Homes from Condos and Apartments.

Mr. Sullivan - He is looking for 10 years of town Census data. He understands one has to buy a physical book for \$25. Can only get it electronically past year only.

Mr. Jarboe - Additional data on the DPW building. 25% tariffs, but what if it is 50%, what is that impact?

Mr. Jarboe - SMART City and municipalities are taking advantage of this, what could Acton take out of this.

Mr. Jarboe - Who buys tickets to concerts, would they pay more through parking, increase in ticket sales, etc.

Ms. Jones - The Legislative policy on certain bills which will impact town finances; and in what way will they be impacted.

Ms. Jones - Marginal cost per household for ancillary services such as Police, Fire, and other services.

Ms. Jones - OPEB, reason it was created a model for good housekeeping, should it not be funded in an upcoming year, etc. A quick explanation was given by Mr. Cole of the definition of OBEB. Acton has done an excellent job funding OPEB.

Ms. Jones - Research funding to Acton businesses, and how many residents would be affected if these government cuts are made.

Ms. Jones - Fiscal impact of non-residents, who they are, what type of space they're occupying.

Ms. Jones - When a new benefit or program is introduced, what can it snowball into.

Ms. Ellie Anderson - Cost/benefit ratio of employee versus contracting out.

Ms. Marianne Fleckner - Health insurance, what is the cost savings, if any, to premiums if certain pharmaceuticals are not offered.

Mr. Martin - Creating a list of reasonable assumptions for Zoning changes.

VI. PHARMACY CLAIMS:

Mr. Sullivan would like to take a deep dive into pharmacy claim costs. For example, Ozempic is \$1,200/month cost. Correlated to the town's higher premiums. Would like to know the utilization percentage and cost over last 2 years at State level and town level. College level comparison is birth control. If can find drugs like this, that can reduce the cost of insurance per person.

Mr. Cole - what is the 5 -10-year cost if these pharmaceutical drugs are not offered/covered. Mr. Cole recommends to look at past 10 years, not 2 years.

Compensation and benefits are a large expense. Health side of medical benefits, less opportunity there versus the pharmaceutical side.

Ms. Jones - first find out if Ozempic is for medical purposes only.

Mr. Sullivan spoke with the Town Manager on Ozempic. The State is looking at an exemption and/or additional co-pay. It is a cost-driver, it is being slightly addressed at the State level.

Ms. Hogseth - 25% premium share, maybe go to 30%, if that can be a consideration

VII. DPW PROJECT:

Needs guidance first on School Budget over the next 3 years before any large commitment can be made on the DPW.

Have a dialog about different scenarios at a high level to determine the pros and cons of each such as:

Looking at the original building as proposed
Look at 3-5 potential alternatives

Look at equipment storage and staffing space issue
Look at no excess capacity built-in, is that an issue
Look at temperature storage needed for the equipment

Can it be proven the original plan design for the DPW building as proposed was the correct sized building?

Mr. Cole - will continue to reject that all equipment needs to be stored in a heating garage.

Mr. Lenz -It depends on who you ask, that may be a biased answer you'll receive.

Time frame on this project? Put scenarios/ideas at the next FinCom meeting.

Mr. Martin - Select Board will have a peer review study conducted on the reduced square footage version.

Mr. Cole will provide FinCom with at least 3 different options for the DPW Facility.

Mr. Bourdon - Consider alternate storage space for seasonal equipment.

Also, what is life expectancy of equipment/vehicles, are the replacements more efficient?

Mr. Bourdon - Do not need professional staff at the DPW Facility.

Mr. Jarboe - Spoke with the DPW Director of Yarmouth. Approved in 2019, construction started in 2021. Yarmouth is very similar in size and scope to Acton and their DPW building is smaller in square footage compared to Acton's DPW new building. Cost was \$17.6m. All agreed we're in a different financial climate than 2019.

Mr. Cole - Suggestions:

- Boxborough took over an existing building. Can Acton do the same?
- Build a much smaller building off the existing building
- Management problem - have yet to prove correct number of employees and equipment

Mr. Sullivan asked Mr. Charter for back-up support of the Alternative that was presented as a No-Go. Mr. Sullivan will go back to Mr. Charter on this question/request.

Ms. Jones - Recommend covered parking. Ms. Andersen commented about the vehicles for snow removal and how they need to be housed indoors.

Ms. Hogseth - Closure of the Conant School. Could that be purchased as the new DPW Building facility.

VIII. LIAISON REPORTS:

Mr. Cole - Friday is graduation, missing volunteers. Please spread the word about "Project Graduation" volunteers.

Ms. Hogseth - Acton Exchange reported the ABRSD received a \$2.75m rebate for geothermal wells plus received a HIT return. Agenda this Friday \$3.82m for final debt for Boardwalk Campus. So, why aren't they using the \$2.75m?

Ms. Andersen - Yes, the School is receiving money back. Will be doing long-term debt borrowing. Yes, receiving \$2.75m tax rebate, put in Capital Stabilization fund. Received

additional Chapter 70 money; this is the expected new level going forward. They plan on backfilling some vacancies with the Chapter 70 money.

Mr. Cole - Can't go to operating costs. Discussion ensued. There is a BAN for the Boardwalk a 1-year rolling note. Then, a final 10-year bond.

Mr. Jarboe - 167-page report of the Economic Development Strategic Plan. A lot of data worth reading. It's a data-rich report.

- Infrastructure and public facilities improvement list
- Key redeployment opportunities section
- Equitable and sustainable growth initiatives

Mr. Bourdon - Please add to the Intern Study list, the idea of creating a DPW Building stabilization fund and/or other stabilization funds for other projects/programs.

Mr. Cole - Conversely, if you save money every year, you're squeezing Prop 2 1/2. Taxpayer is allowing the town to hold the tax payers' money for future projects and that doesn't go over well with some taxpayers. Sure, if non-controversial, unavoidable and no alternative, then a stabilization account may work.

Mr. Bourdon - inquired about tax assessments.

Ms. Jones - what if a project wasn't funded in the past and, instead, money deposited into a stabilization fund for future use, is that possible.

Next meeting June 24, 2025, Room 204, 7:30pm

Mr. Lenz made motion to adjourn, Mr. Cole seconded
Passed Unanimously
9:17pm

Shared Documents:

Mr. Sullivan's written Meeting Notes
Agenda and corresponding information of Agenda items