

Minutes – Acton Finance Committee
June 23, 2009, 6:00 p.m.
Pre-Town Meeting
Room 115 N
Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

Pursuant to a notice duly posted with the Town Clerk and with a quorum of members present, the Acton Finance Committee convened at 6:00 p.m. on June 23, 2009 to review various matters.

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

Also present were and approximately 8 members of the public. Selectman Peter Berry attended to discuss Article 3 “Resolution—South Acton Commuter Rail Station”. Part way through the meeting, Town staff John Murray, Steve Barrett, Doug Halley and Bruce Stamski joined the meeting to be able to answer any questions with respect to sewers. After the conclusion of the sewer discussions, Town staff departed. Selectman Terra Friederichs joined toward the end of the meeting.

Chairman Herman Kabakoff called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Public Participation

None.

Approval of Minutes

Deferred.

Discussion and Recommendations of Town Meeting Articles

Article 3 Resolution—South Acton Commuter Rail Station

Selectman Peter Berry, at the invitation of the Chair, reviewed the rationale for the resolution. In essence, the MBTA has broad latitude to build what they wish within their property rights. However, if the Town wishes to influence the design, we need to give formal input. This resolution is that input. Mr. Berry informed the committee that there might be ongoing maintenance expense for elevators if the Resolution inspired design were to go forward. This was news to the committee. After his presentation, Mr. Berry left the meeting to perform other duties.

Subsequently, after discussion of other articles, Mr. Evans expressed shock at the new information about costs. After some general discussion in concurrence, Mr. Evans moved to reconsider the prior FinCom vote to recommend the article. Pat Clifford seconded the motion. Mr. Mullin said he believed that it would take 80% of those voting to reconsider, which hurdle was attained by a vote in the affirmative by Bob Evans, Pat Clifford, Maryann Ashton, Pat Easterly, Kent Sharp, Doug Tindal and Herman Kabakoff. Steve Noone voted in the negative and Bill Mullin abstained. 7/8 voting being sufficient to reconsider, Mr. Evans moved to Not Recommend Article 3. Pat Clifford seconded the motion. Bob Evans, Pat Clifford, Maryann Ashton, Kent Sharp, Doug Tindal and Herman Kabakoff voted in the affirmative. Steve Noone and Pat Easterly voted in the negative and Bill Mullin abstained. The Motion to Not Recommend Article 3 passed.

Article 1—Sewer Extension

Kent Sharp reviewed the current information on the sewer extension article including the effect of a proposed amendment to carve out Tuttle and Torrington Streets. He also discussed the results of the Town sponsored postcard survey.

After general discussion, the public was invited to speak and those in attendance were fairly evenly split, with some heightened emotions in evidence, especially surrounding the various survey efforts of the town and the citizenry.

Mr. Sharp moved to Recommend Article 1, seconded by Mr. Noone. All voted in favor, save Mr. Evans who voted in the negative.

Mr. Sharp moved to Not Recommend the proposed Amendment, seconded by Pat Clifford. The members voted unanimously in favor of the motion to Not Recommend.

Article 5—Use of Town Facilities of Solar Projects

Doug Tindal reviewed the article and opined the general view that while this sounded like a great idea, absolutely no financial information had been supplied to support the article. He said there are just too many unanswered questions. As such, if we were to be voting yes, we would be voting blindly. Brandy Brandon felt that we needed to know a lot more about the other side of the transaction, meaning the financial costs/benefits for the lessee.

General discussion ensued supporting the feeling that we had grossly inadequate information to make a recommendation in the affirmative.

Mr. Evans moved to Not Recommend Article 5, seconded by Ms. Ashton. The members voted unanimously in favor of the motion to Not Recommend.

Mr. Mullin offered his opinion that Doug Tindal should inform the BoS of our recommendation against, so that they would not be blindsided and to see if we could get some sort of compromise. Mr. Tindal said he would do so.

Article 6—Zoning, Definition of Manufacturing

Mr. Noone moved to Recommend the article, Mr. Tindal seconded. The members voted unanimously in favor of the motion to Recommend.

Discussion with Respect to Communication of New AAA Bond Rating

Mr. Noone brought up the exciting news of the recent increase in the Town of Acton bond rating to AAA. Based on this wonderful news, he felt it was important to communicate to the public the FinCom's pride and satisfaction, etc. Mr. Mullin moved: "That the FinCom issue a press release and letter to the editor with respect to the very positive news about the increase in the Town of Acton's bond rating; that Maryann Ashton, Pat Clifford and Steve Noone create the communication material, subject to approval by the Chair, and; that the communication be delivered as soon as possible to the applicable media." The motion was seconded by Mr. Noone. Vote was unanimous.

Later: On Town Meeting Floor: Amendment to Article 4, Lease of Town Facilities

Mary Michelman moved on Town Meeting floor to amend Article 4, to be more limiting. The original article called for the opportunity to operate “solar, renewable or alternate energy facilities” on the roofs of town buildings. Ms. Michelman’s amendment removed the comma and the words “renewable or alternate” so as to limit the article to just solar energy facilities.

During a brief recess, the committee caucused and voted to support the amendment. Bob Evans, Pat Easterly, Pat Clifford, Maryann Ashton, Doug Tindal, Steve Noone and Herman Kabakoff voted in the affirmative. Kent Sharp voted in the negative and Bill Mullin abstained.

Adjourned

Contemporaneously with the dissolution of Town Meeting, Mr. Sharp moved to adjourn (seconded by Ms. Clifford) and the meeting was adjourned sometime around 11:30 pm

Respectfully submitted by William C. Mullin, Clerk.