

Finance Committee
Joint meeting with Select Board
Meeting Minutes
December 5, 2022
7:00 PM

Present: Adam Nolde (Chair), Steve Noone (Vice Chair), Roland Bourdon, and Christi Andersen

At 7:02 PM Mr. Nolde called the meeting of the Finance Committee to order

I. Regular Business

1. Resident Concerns

Terra, Mass Ave – asked if people will be able to comment during the Open Space discussion, requested that the remaining open seats for the Human Services Committee have experience in Human Services, and to advertise public hearings in the Action Unlimited. Also requested that more indigenous voices are included on the 250 Committee.

2. Chair Update/Town Manager Update/Members Minutes

Mr. Mangiaratti noted the upcoming retirement of Brian McMullen and his presentation of the FY24 tax classification hearing will be his last.

Ms. Nagireddy noted receipt of an email with a letter expressing concern about an appointment to the 250 Committee, and to have an agenda item on a future meeting to discuss, and to have the letter as a matter of public record. Several members also expressed concern about the appointed member and recent social media postings.

Mr. Snyder-Grant acknowledged the loss of Philip Keyes, a long-term member of the Land Stewardship Committee, due to injuries sustained from a motorcycle accident. Reminded any fundraising phone calls alleged to be from the Acton Police Department are to be ignored and any fundraising efforts on behalf of the Police Department are always sent via the U.S. Postal Service. Ms. Arsenault attended the Eagle Scout Court of Honor. Mr. Charter noted the West Acton Stroll was cancelled due to weather and will be rescheduled at a date to be determined.

II. Public Hearings

3. 7:10 PM Tax Classification Hearing

Brian McMullen, Assistant Finance Director/Principal Assessor and Ellie Anderson, Finance Solutions Analyst mentioned that the Classification Hearing is

required annually by state law and helps assist the Select Board with presented the proposed tax classification to the Board with four options to consider:

- Adoption of a residential factor of one resulting in a uniform tax rate
- Adopt an Open Space Discount – Acton has no parcels classified as open space
- Adopt a residential exemption – Acton historically never adopted
- Adopt a small commercial exemption – reduces the taxable value of eligible businesses by up to 10%, with commercial and industrial classes given a separate tax rate from personal property – Acton historically never adopted a small commercial exemption

Ms. Nagireddy questioned about who offers the exemptions. Mr. McMullen noted that it is a state law and every community must have these tax classification hearings. No further questions from Board members.

Mike Gowing, Harris Street - asked what percent rate is residential.

Ann Chang, Economic Development Committee members support continuing the single tax rate.

Terra, Mass Ave – questioned if small businesses receive a discount and larger businesses pay more. Mr. McMullen noted that the benefits split depends on the situation.

Michael Schulze, Brucewood Road – questioned if there was any attempt to divide residential taxes for people who have children and those that are retirees. Mr. McMullen encouraged speaking to a staff member in the Assessor's Office for programs for people on fixed incomes and explain other available programs for residents.

Mike Gowing, Harris Street – encouraged Board members to not shift the tax burden to businesses as many are renting from lessors, and landlords would shift the burden to their tenants.

Mr. Snyder-Grant moved, seconded by Mr. Martin to adopt a Residential Factor rate of 1 and approved unanimously.

Mr. Snyder-Grant moved, seconded by Mr. Martin to not adopt an open space discount and approved unanimously.

Mr. Snyder-Grant moved, seconded by Mr. Martin to not adopt a residential exemption and approved unanimously.

Mr. Snyder-Grant moved, seconded by Mr. Martin to not adopt a small commercial exemption and approved unanimously.

4. 7:30 PM Site Plan Special Permit #7/12/2022-487, 100 Discovery Way

Mr. Charter read the public hearing notice and noted the applicant has requested a continuance. **Mr. Martin moved, seconded by Ms. Arsenault to continue the hearing for Site Plan Special Permit #7/12/2022-487, 100 Discovery Way to December 19, 2022 at 7:10 PM and approved unanimously.**

III. New/Special Business

5. Economic Outlook Presentation – Economic Development Director Julie Pierce

Julie Pierce presented an FY22 economic snapshot of the status of Acton. Some of the highlights are the increase in residential development, new businesses entering the community, infrastructure projects, and growing businesses. Ms. Pierce noted some key economic indicators such as decreasing unemployment, an increase in building permits, and an increase in property sales. The four biggest needs identified were maintaining a uniform tax rate, making improvements to digital and physical infrastructure, updating bylaws, and adopting a guiding economic growth goal. Ms. Pierce intends to present a yearly report on the economic outlook for the Select Board and recommends the Board consider adopting a goal regarding economic growth.

Alissa Nicol, School Street – appreciates including wastewater solutions was added to the presentation, questioned what percentage is growing rapidly and comparing it to a report from years ago noting an 8% growth in 30 years, noted no lack in wastewater solutions with several options such as septic, package treatment plants as an option, the availability of sewer in Kelley's Corner, and encourages the Economic Development Office and Economic Development Committee to consider other sewerage options other than municipal services, and consider action replenishing the groundwater aquifers in South Acton rather than diverting to other areas in town.

Terra, Mass Ave – commented on the need for wastewater treatment, mentioned it is not fair to explain wastewater differences as restaurant vs. car dealership, there are other ways we can curb what businesses we allow based on the water we use; focus on rezoning to restrict the number of car dealerships, create a "restaurant mile" instead of an "auto mile," Insulet Corp. utilizing the most water in town, prefer higher residential taxes and limit the number of businesses allowed in town; support Acton Housing Rehab Trust.

Franny Osman, Half Moon Hill – commented on the need for affordable housing for municipal employees, the low unemployment rate is due to people that can't afford to live in Acton while unemployed, feels municipal wastewater is important for business particularly in West Acton where restaurants are so limited in the number of tables they can have, the need for sidewalks in Kelley's Corner, and to not build sidewalks to nowhere, encourage a discussion with Stop & Shop regarding the Kmart property and the Senior Center lease.

6. Capital Improvement Plan Presentation – Town Manager John S. Mangiaratti

Mr. Mangiaratti presented to both the Select Board and the Finance Committee the Capital Improvement Plan which spans over a ten-year period, noting it is the beginning of the Budget process, and plays a large part on the Select Board goals and goal planning, and noting one of the plans is including the Climate Action Plan overseen by Andrea Becerra, Sustainability Director. One of larger projects

is electrification of the three largest municipal buildings; the Public Safety Facility, the Memorial Library, and Town Hall, as well as school buildings. For the ten-year plan, there is a total of \$102 million in investments in the community, 97 proposed projects, with some projects needing additional revenue. Mr. Mangiaratti highlighted FY24 CIP projects including the electrification of the municipal buildings, the DPW facility design and construction, construction of the tight tank for Fire Station 3, Maple Street commuter rail and rail trail parking, and implement a body-worn camera program for the Police Department. Mr. Mangiaratti listed several FY24 Free Cash projects, and enterprise fund projects. Mr. Charter questioned the electrification of the Public Safety Facility building and what type of heating and cooling systems will be considered, Mr. Mangiaratti noted it is listed in the Climate Action Plan. Mr. Martin questioned if smaller buildings would be considered, Mr. Mangiaratti felt that an additional \$60K would be pulled from ARPA funding for electrification of smaller municipal buildings.

Mr. Nolde, Finance Committee questioned if the PSF is going to be converted from natural gas to 100% electric, with confirmation from Mr. Mangiaratti.

Mr. Majors, Finance Committee questioned if the electrification was more of a cost-saving goal, Mr. Mangiaratti noted it was to decrease emissions and towards the climate goals of the community.

Ms. Andersen questioned about the Maple Street parking lot and how much usage it has received, Mr. Mangiaratti noted it to be at 50% usage.

Mr. Bourdon, Finance Committee urged the Town Manager to look into issues with people parking their vehicles on Maple Street blocking the bike lane, and to revisit the facility studies completed years ago regarding the original three fire stations and upgrades that are needed. Mr. Mangiaratti explained the proposed funding and updates that have been completed, and the addition of a new fire station that moved equipment around to facilitate more room in the existing older fire stations. Mr. Magiaratti also mentioned that he is working on electrifying all fleets. Mr. Bourdon recommended replacing the two Ford F150 with the Police Department. Mr. Wellinghoff, Finance Committee questioned if the schools have a similar plan.

Ann Chang – requests the two projects involving the Library and parking lot involve Memorial Library Trustees.

Alissa Nicol, South Acton – encouraged the Finance Committee to look at the cost of the electrification projects, to look into all the other options for cost savings, and impacts to human health.

Franny Osman, Half Moon Hill – questioned if the borrowing to do the priority sidewalks is in the CIP, Mr. Mangiaratti noted it is in the 10-year plan, not for FY24.

Terra, Mass Ave – appreciates the Finance Committee supporting green initiatives, encourages not calling natural gas “natural”, encourages the board to ensure the Acton Center Fire Station would be supported with the addition of the North Acton Fire Station, questioned if the Town of Acton is on 100% Green with Acton Power Choice, Mr. Mangiaratti confirmed.

Scott Smyers, Central Street – concerned about switching over to 100% green energy, encourages to have backup generators when the power grid is down.

Adam Nolde moved, seconded by Christie Andersen to adjourn the Finance Committee and approved unanimously.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

Tax Classification Presentation

Capital Improvement Plan