

Finance Committee Meeting

July 8, 2025

7:30pm

Acton Town Hall, Room 204

Present: Mr. Cole, Mr. Noone, Mr. Bourdon, Mr. Sullivan (Chair), Ms. Andersen, Mr. Leffler, Ms. Hogseth, Mr. Jarboe (virtual)

Mr. Sullivan called meeting to order at 7:30 PM

Ms. Fleckner announced her upcoming retirement and that Ellie Anderson will be taking over as FinCom liaison following her retirement in August

Public Comment: None

Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes: Meeting minutes not previously voted on identified by Mr. Cole and Ms. Fleckner. Minutes will be reviewed by members and voted on at a future meeting

DPW—Continued from June 24th meeting:

Mr. Sullivan: Continuation of discussion from previous meeting—marker to open discussion for members. There are a couple of priorities: minimizing tax impact and determining what is really needed.

Mr. Jarboe: Prepared slides and presented from them. Disagrees that one side was sharing opinions and that the other was presenting facts. One fact is that 56.1% of voters voted no on Question 1 and the other is that the FinCom did not recommend the amended article 7 to appropriate \$150,000 to continue project investigation.

FinCom believes that any long-term debt warrants extreme caution—this opinion has not changed and anticipates that this will continue. Concern about tariffs—enacted under Section 232 on June 4th and amounts to 50% on steel and aluminum—creates volatility.

FinCom believes that staffing solutions are most urgent needs but vehicle storage can be addressed separately from a new building

2013 Space Needs study stated the need for a new DPW building long-term, but that this could be addressed with improvement and not just whole-scale replacement. This provides FinCom with viable framework with which to move forward—provides blueprint for phased expansion and functional upgrades

2015 Facilities Study said that we need a new DPW building, but did not include any cost. Town Meeting poll showed that voters recognize the need for a solution, but the cost is the issue.

Proposed that the FinCom adopt the Minimum Viable Project approach to a new DPW building and investigate comparable communities with similar projects such as Yarmouth, Middleborough and Marshfield.

Mr. Sullivan: For the record, clarified that this presentation was prepared by Mr. Jarboe and represents his opinion only.

Mr. Bourdon: How many full-time employees? 34.1 FTEs according to budget book. DPW at one time looking to combine Facilities and other departments into the same building. Seems like a viable option, but the town has grown since 2013 when the study was completed. Wash bay does not need to be built right away. Out-of-season equipment can be stored elsewhere when not in use. If needed, a wash bay can be built after the fact.

Mr. Cole: Echoing Mr. Bourdon, does not want perfection at the enemy of the good. Describing the project as minimum might not be viable—let's meet the problems where they are and solve the problems that need to be solved (health and safety of employees). Come forward with a plan to address the immediate needs and nothing more. Understands a concept for building for storage, but we already have multiple buildings which could store vehicles.

Ms. Andersen: Not convinced that the building is too large, but wants to see more. Questioned if Mr. Sullivan has received the data he requested—Mr. Sullivan commented not yet. Analysis of fleet and equipment is important to understand space needs. Redundancy might be needed, but want to see the numbers.

Ms. Hogseth: How do we identify the differences between the Acton and the Yarmouth DPW buildings—how much would it cost today to build the Yarmouth building in Acton? Can we put the FinCom DPW video back online?

Mr. Noone: Sat on the original committee when these studies were done. Precursor to the ABRSD and Town Capital Study Committee—two critical needs established in 2016: 1) New Gates-Douglas School Building, 2) North Acton Fire Station Building, 3) New DPW Building. Identified the replacement costs for an as-is building at \$6M or \$1M in improvements—would not have accomplished what was needed and the study pointed this out—but recommended 3600 sq. ft of office and 3600 sq. ft of three-sided vehicle storage.

Mr. Sullivan: Did they do an equipment analysis? Mr. Noone—did schematics only. Would like to know the size of the fleet in 2015 to see if the fleet is the same size and if this is an apple to apples comparison. To determine what building a 30,000 sq. ft building would cost in 2025 in Acton, could compare to the Subaru dealership being built in Nagog.

Ms. Andersen: FinCom should not be trying to figure out these calculations. How do we communicate this better?

Mr. Cole: That's what we tried to accomplish with the two joint SB FinCom Meetings—told to let the votes to decide and they did. \$150k was appropriated to keep this building project alive--want the money to be used to come up with the next best plan.

Mr. Sullivan: When we listen to the taxpayers, the two loudest voices were that we need to take care of staff but don't want to spend that much money. Does not want to spend any more money designing buildings, would rather revisit the 2013 plan.

Mr. Cole: For us to build the right size building we need to go through another 60% schematic which is going to cost money—looking for the needs-only or minimum viable plan—the viable scope and then design that.

Mr. Sullivan: understands that no matter what is done, money is going to have to spent on plans—went back to 2013 because that study identified that issues could be resolved with two separate projects—if the building for staff were built elsewhere, staff would move in and then can complete needs analysis on what equipment is needed and how it needs to be stored—taxpayers need to understand that there are other staffing solutions which do not require a new building

Mr. Noone: The old Saab dealer which was evaluated by the Town as a temporary solution as there is existing office space and auto repair facilities. What would it cost to upgrade if a permanent home?

Mr. Sullivan: no Select Board meeting yesterday and the next meeting in two weeks—what are the next steps? Should be talking about scenarios with the SB which we could be supportive off though we do not know the financial cost or the financial constraints—build, buy, borrow—look at a few scenarios which might be viable as we wait for financial information.

Mr. Jarboe: At the next FinCom meeting, how far along on this process are we expecting to be? DPW Building Committee will be meeting soon for the first time since town meeting.

Mr. Sullivan: Not expecting to have definitive answer apart from dialogue—the resonating theme is that we'd like to look at this as a decoupled project-- look for solutions for staff and explore existing real estate.

Mr. Cole: Likely that Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Bourdon will be asked at ALG for a number for the project—not a great position to be in. Take the Weston Sampson Yarmouth cost and increase for inflation, as well as the McGovern dealership cost. Incumbent on FinCom to get a number and then have the best designed project within those bounds.

Mr. Sullivan: Doesn't disagree with Mr. Cole, but the equipment study is important because we need to know what the optimal number of pieces of equipment is needed.

Mr. Leffler: Invite towns that are a good fit and have them come speak to FinCom—get them to share their experience to get some firsthand information

Mr. Jarboe: Spoke with the DPW Director of Yarmouth. Commented that Yarmouth held their town meeting before they held their debt exclusion vote—also had an override the previous year.

Mr. Bourdon: Suggested joint meeting with the Select Board. Also, the old Toyota dealership on Rt 2A might be a viable option. There are other alternatives in Town—don't need to have the

town engineer and ancillary staff in that building. Thinks the estimated project cost will be \$12M.

Mr. Jarboe: \$16.2 M in 2021 by Weston and Sampson—square footage was 37,990 and ours was 43,056—about 6000 sq ft smaller. Not a green building, but staff does work in the building.

Mr. Bourdon: went to Hingham DPW—not a green building but they do have 2-3 staff working out the building with basic storage facilities.

Mr. Cole: Who was the vehicle data request sent to?

Mr. Sullivan: emailed people, plan to request in person at the SB meeting—will email again and will request in person if there's not results between now and then

Mr. Noone: Collins Center has a fleet analysis tool for communities looking to build new DPW building—regarding ALG, based on last year's ALG, the system has broken the ALG was presented as a joint document though the FinCom did not approve it.

Ms. Andersen: would like to have the people separate from the garage because then you can address each as needs arise—allows for some sort of growth plan—do not think answer is to build a too big building, build what we need right now with an understanding of how it will need to grow

Mr. Bourdon: agrees, why he does not think that wash bay is needed right now—likes the idea that you can grow if you need to or even shrink—build it the right size now but note that building is flexible

Mr. Sullivan: also agrees with this approach—look at staff and storage independently—maybe the final answer is that everything should be together but this could be demonstrated to voters if it is the case

Mr. Jarboe: In the 2013 plan they estimated that the 21,000 of usable DPW sq. ft space in 2013 assumed that it would be sufficient through 2033, but now we're asking for double that—why? What happened? What's it needed for?

Capital Planning: No discussion, deferred to later meeting

Liaison Reports: None

Open Items: Next meeting is July 22nd, two meetings in August for intern presentations

Mr. Leffler: motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Cole—Roll call vote—passed unanimously—adjourned at 8:44pm