Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

May 12, 2015 Acton Town Hall

Attending: Chairman Steve Noone, Vice-Chair Mike Majors, Clerk Margaret Woolley Busse, Doug Tindal, Herman Kabokoff, Bob Evans

Absent: Bill Mullin, Roland Bourdon (Mary Ann Ashton has resigned from the Finance Committee, effective May 9, 2015

Also attending: Brian McMullen

Chairman Noone called the meeting to order at 7:34pm

I.   Public Participation: None heard

II.   Municipal Third Quarter Report: Brian McMullen updated the committee. Several committee members commented on the lack of transparency re: the way the Nursing Service enterprise fund reports its numbers since it doesn't reflect full losses that Nursing Services has incurred. Significant deficit for snow and ice because of severe winter, so Brian doesn't anticipate any turn backs at the end of this FY because of this deficit.

III.   Feedback on FY16 Budget Process and Town Meeting: Steve—Came together really late, even later than last year; Herman agrees with it and says it has to be fixed; also believes Town meeting turnout is pathetic and something needs to be done: Bob—agrees that it was late, but isn't too worried about the fact that we don't have that many people; we need to have interaction earlier on this year so our Point of View can be more influential in budget making; Doug: Town Meeting would benefit from more robust participation; also Town Meeting should perhaps occur later in the state's budget cycle so decisions being made without full information; Margaret: Much more outreach needs to be done; Finance Committee can do its own; but the larger onus for outreach should be on the Board of Selectmen. Mike: Agrees that Town Meeting should be later, so we have more sure budget numbers. Need to explore technology solutions—can we do voting by texts/smartphones, etc? Low turn-out gives special interest undue influence. Steve: felt like the ALG process went better than in previous years. Doug: As a town, we need to have more interaction amongst the various committees. Furthermore, we need to be talking to other finance committees/sharing best practices.

IV.   Discussion of Job Description for Land Use Planning/Economic Development Position. Bob: Very bureaucratic in its language; not able to attract the type of person we would want; does not reflect what we discussed at Town Meeting/Budget Saturday; Doug: too much about "supervising" and not enough about "doing;" Econ Dev needs a hustler, not a supervisor; Margaret recommends that if we only have funds allocated for 1 FTE, then hire two separate people .5 Land Use, and .5 Economic Development Director; Herman: Agrees that this description should be scrapped and more focused on Economic Development; Mike: cannot do both jobs effectively, one would fail at both. Steve: Recommend: Scrap current description, put in more re: economic director

V.   MOTION: Herman moves that we direct the Chairman to respond to Town Manager that reflects the sense of the committee which is that the position description should be scrapped and the emphasis in the description should reflect a true 50/50 split between Land Use and Economic Development. Doug Tindal seconded the motion and the committee voted unanimously to support it.

VI.   Committee business:
   a. Minutes approved: March 10th, 2015: Unanimous except Doug who abstained since he wasn't there; March 24, 2015 Unanimous; April 6, 2015: Unanimous with amendment of Doug Tindal's name in attendance
   b. Committee reports: Herman updated us on BoS last meeting; Margaret: Acton 2020 also working on recommendations for Econ Dir/Land Use position; Kelley's Corner had public meeting last week; now has preliminary plans for infrastructure and zoning and design. Doug suggested that we work with an on-the-ground broker that can tell us what kind of rents different properties could really get; Bob reported on Health Insurance Trust

VII.   Meeting adjourned at 9:18pm

Documents used: Town of Acton 3rd Quarter Financial report; Draft description of position for Land Use and Economic Development Director