

**Acton Leadership Group Meeting Minutes,  
June 30, 2016, 7:30 AM, Room 204, Acton Town Hall**

Present: Bart Wendell (facilitator), Amy Krishnamurthy and Paul Murphy (ABRSC), Janet Adachi and Peter Berry (BOS), Margaret Busse and Doug Tindal (Fincom), Steve Ledoux, Glenn Brand, and Steve Barrett (staff)

Audience: Charlie Kadlec, Clare Jeannotte

**1. Introduction of Members and Review of ALG Charter and Ground Rules**

Bart distributed the most recent set of ground rules. He notes that "every year starts anew," so we must review and adopt.

Paul has a question on facilitator: do we have something to say about a replacement? Bart responds that it is up to the group, but could we park that for a minute. He directs everyone to look in the middle of the page, "In summary." There have been many changes since we began, including the regionalization of the schools. Are these still the right four things?

- Revenue projections
- Plan for building of multi-year model
- Recommend one-year model
- Take ALG plan out of warrant – call it three-boards' plan

Margaret says that the top three seem to be the things that ALG does. She thinks it is interesting that in the first paragraph the primary goal is multi-year plan, whereas it seems that most of the focus has been on one-year plan. Fourth bullet doesn't seem to fit - seems like a one-time thing.

Doug says he has advocated for longer-term thinking, and it seems important to reach a common vision for where we're going financially both long-term and short-term. We ought to keep that vision alive unless we're repudiating that. Longer-term, these representatives here are the senior leadership.

Margaret would like to add "upcoming fiscal year as well as on a multi-year. . ." Janet suggests that we add "with particular focus on the upcoming year." It would be good to have broader aspirations than just one year. As far as the list of bullets, I'd remove the 4th bullet.

Doug says "we need to have focus beyond current year, what are the level of reserves, what is the expense policy." He thinks it is important to capture the mechanics of the first year, but then focus on the longer-term policy. We need to have "policy" in there somewhere.

Margaret suggests "multi-year financial policy and plan."

Doug says "if we walk out of here after 12 months without addressing policy, we'll have failed."

Paul says the group needs to keep eyes on the horizon.

Bart summarizes the proposed changes in the first paragraph in the second sentence as follows:

The primary goal of the Acton Leadership Group is to reach consensus on a multi-year financial *policy and plan* for the Town of Acton, *with particular focus on the upcoming year*, to recommend to their respective boards. (italics indicate added text)

Everyone nods their agreement with the revision.

Bart continues that the rules at bottom are important to agree to. The first discussion is regarding the definition of a quorum with no substitutes.

Paul asks what is the thinking about not allowing substitutes. Janet answers "continuity," and Doug answers "accountability." Peter Berry adds that he would like to keep the quorum requirement as is, but if a regular staff person couldn't be there, another staff member could respond to questions while sitting in the audience. In response to a question, Steve Ledoux said that staff are designated by the managers. Doug adds that there should be "no substituting substitutes." Bart confirms that staff are Glenn, Marie, Steve Ledoux and Steve Barrett.

The next discussion was about weather: should there be a delay if school is delayed? Should we meet no matter what? Paul thought that we should leave it as is ("Mimics Acton-Boxborough Regional School decisions"). Margaret thought the group should meet no matter what. Janet said she thought it should stay the same, but that the manager and superintendent should make a decision, especially if there was a delay for the schools.

Bart finally talked about how the job of this group is not to decide policy or plan, but to recommend such to their boards. Once something is agreed to, all are expected to make a good faith commitment to present back to their boards. "This is what we've agreed to, and I think you should support it because . . ." This is the crucial piece which can trip up everyone. He emphasized that a member cannot agree to it here, and then go back to his/her board and not support.

## **2. Approval of Meeting Minutes, February 25, 2016**

Minutes accepted.

## **3. Update of FY16 Revenues and Expenditures – Steve Ledoux, Glenn Brand**

Steve Ledoux introduced Steve Barrett, wishing everyone a "Happy Fiscal Year-end Eve." Steve Barrett indicated there would be a small turnback of approximately \$300-500K, mostly generated from snow and ice budget, gas and diesel. On the revenue side, there were some additional receipts in the \$300-\$500K range, due to the fact that the town has already hit the motor vehicle excise tax target for the year, and there has been some tax deferral payoff. They are wrapping up the year-end. Free cash certification will probably go in by September.

Glenn Brand indicated that regional transportation aid came in more favorably than expected (72 percent reimbursement versus 65 percent budgeted). They are currently closing out the fiscal year. Favorable spending expected to be .5-.8 percent of the budget. Budget subcommittee meets biweekly. Meeting with them to talk about any extra balances: circuit breaker and E&D. Both of these are trying to improve our bond rating in anticipation of future borrowing.

Margaret asks the Superintendent for any update on the SC's legislative effort. Clare Jeannette responded that there has been no movement in legislature to address Foundation Budget Review recommendations, and that declining state revenues have made this more difficult.

#### **4. Review of Spreadsheet – Steve Barrett, Marie Altieri**

Steve Ledoux circulated what he described as an illustration of the "final product" from last year's warrant. Steve Barrett further described that there is an electronic workbook with multiple tabs, and what was circulated is the front page summary. He said that he and Marie Altieri try to get spreadsheet to the group ahead of time. They track any changes on a separate sheet. Members can follow what changed in assumptions and effect on plan.

Peter says that last year's group worked on the format, and he thinks it looks good. He asks why debt exclusion is included as a funding source.

Steve Ledoux responds that this distinguishes debt exclusion revenue from the general tax levy. Steve Barrett says that on the Proposition 2-1/2 data that the town provides to DOR, debt exclusion is a separate item. He says they could collapse the debt exclusion data into the general tax levy. Steve Ledoux warns that the danger of collapsing it is when you look at future years, and you may not appreciate that debt exclusion is declining.

#### **5. Discussion of Meeting Schedule**

Bart and Steve Ledoux provide some context. ALG has been meeting on a Thursday morning from 7:30 until 9 a.m. There have been some adjustments, especially during the winter months when the group has sometimes met at 5 p.m. The group meets several times per month during the busy budget months (January, February, sometimes March). The group has also tried to be sensitive about Thursdays when the SC is meeting.

After discussion, the group agrees to meet at 7:15 a.m. as a general rule, and asks Steve Ledoux and Glenn Brand to come up with a proposed schedule of meeting dates for next meeting.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, September 1 at 7:15 a.m. Tentative agenda items include:

- Update on revenue/expenses
- Spreadsheet
- Recommendation of meeting schedule - Glenn and Steve L
- Schedule of decisions - staff
- Reserves policy (agree that this should be after Fincom has had an opportunity to discuss themselves in September)

## **6. Public Comment**

Charlie Kadlec distributed copies of the town website description of ALG. He suggests that there are areas highlighted which should be updated to reflect what actually happens at ALG.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 a.m.

Submitted by Mary Ann Ashton