



# Town of Acton Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019  
Town Hall Room 204 7:30 pm

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**Members in Attendance:**

Steve Noone, Jason Cole, Mike Majors, Roland Bourdon, Dave Wellinghoff, Christi Andersen, Tom Farley, Christine Russell, Sahana Purohit (associate)

**Absent:** Jeff Bergart

**Other:** Jon Benson, Board of Selectmen

Kristen Guichard, Town of Acton Senior Planner,  
John Mangiaratti Town Manager,  
Roland Bartyl Planning Director  
Cory York Public Works Director  
Chris Sammett – Fire Department  
Chris Prehl – Police Department  
John Petersen of Jackson Drive

Called to order at: 7:32

Recorded by Acton TV

**Public Participation:**

John Petersen – Asked if Minuteman could get a long-term bond before the project was completed, why can't we for the twin school?

He would like the Finance Committee to research other similar school building projects to see their bonding costs and other financial issues encountered.

Jon Benson, Board of Selectmen – In the context of the trend of increased English Language Learner (ELL) students in the district he related the situation in the Chelsea school district where they are dealing with a high immigrant population forcing the need to cut teachers and increase class sizes to meet budget. It would be

ideal if state would take over Spec Ed since they mandate it. When looking at finances, we need to balance senior population needs with school budget needs.

### **Kelley's Corner Presentation**

(A link to the presentation is at the end of this document.)

The improvement of the Kelley's Corner intersection (where Route 27 meets Route 111) is the top goal of the Board of Selectmen and the town management.

The town proposes to use \$525k free cash to complete the design phase of the project.

Addition requested design of \$525k-

\$75k for eventual appraisal

\$405k for supplemental design

The total design cost of \$1.2m+ includes the additional costs listed above and \$756k that were already approved at the 2016 town meeting. Future design related funding requests are not expected.

Remaining projected costs to the town are approximately \$814k for ornamental lighting to beautify the area.

The state will pay \$14.5m for all of the construction costs of the project including takings of land along route 111.

If the project is not done, the town will need to pay \$2m in costs of storm water and bike lanes over the next 10 years. If the Kelley's Corner project is approved, this work will be paid for by the \$14.5m of state funds.

The redesign will improve traffic flow and make the infrastructure compliant with accessibility requirements

In addition to the changes to improve traffic flow at the route 111/route 27 intersection, the project has added a light at the intersection of Community Lane and 111 to ease traffic flow and fix the currently dangerous intersection as people exit from the TD Bank/CVS plaza.

A light at Charter Road improves walker safety as students leave the open campus. There will now be safe crossing at times when the crossing guards are not there. Street level sidewalks along 111 between Charter Road and route 27 help with ADA compliance.

To improve transportation options, a stop for the town bus will be added on 111 next to Charter Road.

The MassDOT review for 25% design is done. The next step is a MassDOT led public hearing to gather feedback and hear public comments about the project. This will be held on March 5<sup>th</sup> at Town Hall.

The land taking cost estimate is based on the recent Kmart property appraisal price per sq. ft. That number was then applied to space that will need to be taken. The

land taking cost includes all of Community Lane. Because funds are coming from the Federal government, it is required that formal estimates not be made until later in the approval process.

The town's taking cost is currently estimated at \$1.5m using the process described above. The state's takings cost is estimated at \$1.9m.

Traffic design has taken into account potential future businesses and housing behind the CVS on 111 and at the Kmart lot.

Ongoing maintenance costs should not add to the DPW budget. Snow removal around islands shouldn't be an increase in difficulty. Islands will be put up for adoption to maintain their landscaping.

The project is on the list for MassDOT construction funds to be paid to a contractor in FY22. The project should take 2-3yrs of construction seasons to complete.

Dave requests further details on takings estimates for the town meeting presentations.

## **ALG Feedback and Guidance**

### **Lessening of Unused Levy Capacity**

Schools will use \$150k of E&D to cover operating costs. This decrease in Acton's share of the school budget would leave \$150k of unused tax levy capacity.

The school district would like to use future turnbacks to create a stabilization fund to be used in years 3 and 4 of the current CIP plan. They would like to keep the E&D fund at \$4.5m.

Acton will still have some unused levy capacity (\$150k) for the future. The town is increasing use of reserves to cover rest of the budget shortfall.

### **Initial Ranges for Capital Projects**

The expected cost for the North Acton Fire Station has increased to \$9.5m.

The Gates site has been selected for the new twin school building. A decision needs to be made about whether to construct the new building in one or two phases. Neither phase affects the MSBA funding.

One Phase construction: \$135m to be complete September 2022. This project requires removing part of the Gates building and using modular structures to temporarily replace the lost classrooms.

Two Phase construction: \$138.5m to complete the replacement of the Gates building followed by the construction of the portion of the twin school that will house Douglas. The phase is projected to be complete in Sept 2022. The remainder of the construction including the Douglas replacement would be complete in Sept 2023.

Both cost estimates include 30% for unforeseen costs. The school has been told to subtract 10% of MSBA siting estimate because everyone overruns the site

estimation costs which MSBA caps. The current guess is that the town share will cost \$80m. This is based on the current student population based cost split of wherein Acton pays for 85% of the school district budget.

The district cannot take out a long-term note until project is completed. The twin school's long-term borrowing won't occur for next two years, so the town and district didn't include it in next two years of borrowing costs. Long-term borrowing for the twin school will occur in FY23, which falls into middle of Finance Committee's 5-year model.

MSBA reimbursement starts soon. The reimbursement rate is 45.3% during feasibility phase. By November, we will know the reimbursement rate for the building phase.

## **Committee Business**

### **Minutes:**

No minutes were reviewed.

### **Committee Reports:**

School committee – Christine Russell

School Committee member Mary Brolin is not running again.

Eileen Zhang is not sure whether she will continue. Expect two open slots.

There was a new bussing study. They are close to the ideal numbers for ridership and getting to schools on time. To cover busy routes, two new busses are needed.

The district is considering only offering all day kindergarten. The current estimate is that this would add \$1.2m to the budget.

Minuteman High School – Mike Majors

The new building project continues to be on schedule and under budget. 57% of the budget has spent and 94.6% has been committed.

Walker Property – Mike Majors

A 31 unit senior housing 40B project with potential dog park has been selected. The project will be presented to the Board of Selectmen next week. The town would get \$1m for land half of which would come from CPC funds.

CPC – Roland

The following requests were made for CPC funds.

Jones Field - \$269k to pay for part of a multi-phase project.

Arboretum - \$55k to build an ADA Compliant Entrance

China Trail - \$15k to build a trail in the Arboretum supported by donations of design and plants from the Chinese community. They remove invasive species as a part of the construction process.

There are upcoming presentations before the CPC regarding the Asa Parlor House (behind Town Hall in the parking lot) and a proposal to turn the 53 River St lot into a historic park.

**Point of View Outreach Schedule**

All time slots are filled. We need a way to reach out to Junior High and Senior High parents. We will provide Point of View slides/document to pass around to those parents since their PTSO attendance isn't good.

A motion to adjourn was made by Dave Wellinghoff and seconded by Tom Farley. It passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Christi Andersen  
Finance Committee Clerk

Referenced Documents entered into the public record:  
Planning Department Kelley's Corner Presentation  
<http://www.acton-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5342/2019-1-22-Kelleys-Corner-Finance-Committee-Presentation>