

Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes
April 23rd, 2019
7:30 PM
Town Hall, Room 204

Present: Jason Cole, Roland Bourdon , Mike Majors, Steve Noone, Dave Wellinghoff, Christine Russell, Christi Andersen, Sahana Purohit (Associate), Al Vlajinac(Associate)

Absent: Tom Farley, Jeff Bergart

1. Opening

Chair Jason Cole opened the meeting at 7:32 PM
This meeting was recorded by Acton TV.

2. Public Participation

None

3. ABRSC Reserves & Stabilization Policies

An Acton Boxborough Regional School Staff Member, Dave Verdolino and School Committee Member, Diane Baum were present at the FinCom meeting to obtain feedback from the Committee Members on the ABRSC Reserves & Stabilization Policies.

Question/Concern:

Steve- The policy cites that state law limits the excess & deficiency at 5% of the budget. The law as he reviewed it said 5% of the budget plus next year's capital budget.

Response:

Not in the Dept of Revenues calculation of such. Their goal is between 4-4.5% which is below that maximum. The budgeted capital costs are part of the proposed budget so they've already been captured.

Question/Concern:

Christine –Acquisition of land, construction, reconstruction, addition to or equipment of district owned buildings feels too broad/not specific enough for a budget item. Could equipment be defined as pencils etc.?

Response:

The intention was to keep it broad enough to adequately equip home buildings, which is proper use of money set aside for capital. A capital project is defined to have value of \$25,000 or more.

Question/Concern:

Christi –There isn't the same level of acknowledgment as when a warrant goes out and the whole Town has the opportunity to vote on the School Budget at Town Meeting. Only parents really go to school committee meetings.

Response:

The School Committee is committed to transparency. They're working with IT to make the budget information available online, so anyone can track it. The School Committee meetings are open to the public. They are also required to maintain and submit tracking of the budget.

Recommendations:

Steve recommends that the School Committee regularly present on the reserves and stabilization fund at the Annual Town Meeting. Jason would like to see a progress report based on what the School Committee had previously projected funds would be used for and what they were actually used for, if not at the ATM, then at Budget Saturday.

Question/Concern:

Jason-What are consequences if the ABRSC doesn't reach their target of 4 - 4.5%?

Response: The School Committee member present didn't want to respond on this alone as it wasn't something a response was prepared for by the ABRSC Board.

Question/Concern:

Jason- Has the Acton Board of Selectmen reviewed the ABRSC Reserves & Stabilization Policies and do they feel comfortable with the 45 day response time frame allotted to them when an Amendment is set forth?

Response:

Selectmen Jon Benson replied that the BOS has not reviewed the policies but the 45 day window (the law) is plenty of time.

4. Annual Town Meeting Review

After Town Meeting, FinCom makes it a point to talk about what members think went well at Town Meeting and what could be improved upon for next year's Meeting.

The warrant: Timing of the warrant gives little time for FinCom to effectively examine each item. As a way to be proactive for next year, Christi volunteered to review and create a calendar in regards to Citizens Petitions and having different Boards that have Warrant Item present for FinCom.

Citizens Petitions: The Board had mixed views regarding the low number of signatures required for Citizens Petitions to get on the warrant. The consensus was that they would be more effective in general if the Citizens approached the Boards and Committees first.

Warrant Article #38 (Kmart Parcel) Jason addressed Selectmen Jon Benson regarding what we can do to raise our 40B numbers so that we don't have to worry about this large parcel no longer being under our zoning laws.

Jon said that we will meet our 40B 10% requirement with the pending Powder Mill Rd project. He added that he and Town Manager John Mangiaratti have a meeting scheduled with one of the Stop & Shop Real Estate Representatives to see if they can work together to develop the parcel.

FinCom ReVoting – The Committee discussed the criteria they used for reopening the vote on warrant articles that have already been voted on. Dave was concerned with revotes when there was not materially new information. Jason talked about recent revotes when people were present that had not voted previously, there was a close split, or fluidity in those present now vs. previously.

Citizen Concerns - Al proposed that the Committee follow up on the Open Meeting Law concerns that were raised by residents speaking at Town Meeting. Jon Benson assured the Committee that the repetitive OML Complaints are on the top of the Town Manager's agenda. He intends to plan meetings with local representatives and Officials in Cities/Towns facing similar issues.

5. Regular Business

A. Discuss Open Meeting Law Complaints

There were no new Open Meeting Law Complaints to address at this meeting.

B. Approval of meeting minutes

The minutes from March 12th were reviewed and approved unanimously.

The minutes from March 26th were reviewed. Amendments were added. The minutes were approved as amended, with only Christi Andersen abstaining.

The minutes from April 1st were reviewed. Amendments were added. The minutes were approved as amended, with only Dave Wellinghoff abstaining.

C. Committee Liaison Reports

Each of the Committee Members who are liaisons to Committees that met during the interim between last FinCom meeting and this meeting gave reports as to what occurred at those meetings.

5. Adjournment

At 9:04p.m., it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- ABRSD Reserves Policy & Stabilization Fund Policy
- March 12th Minutes
- March 26th Minutes
- April 1st Minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Finance Committee