

Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

August 18, 2020

7:00 PM

* VIRTUAL MEETING *

Present: Christi Andersen, Roland Bourdon, Jason Cole, Mike Majors, Adam Nolde, Steve Noone, Sahana Purohit, Christine Russell, David Wellinghoff, Esha Gangolli (Associate)

Ms. Andersen called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM via a virtual meeting with no Committee members in physical attendance and broadcasted via Zoom and ActonTV.

1. Citizen's Concerns

There were no comments from the public.

2. Warrant Recommendations

Article 2 - Amend Town Charter – Title of the Chief Executive: Selectman David Martin spoke on behalf of the article, which renames the Board of Selectmen to “Select Board.” This article will result in no appropriation from the Town.

Ms. Purohit moved to recommend the article. Mr. Bourdon seconded. Ms. Andersen called the roll:

Ms. Russell – aye

Mr. Bourdon – aye

Mr. Cole – nay

Mr. Noone – aye

Mr. Majors – aye

Ms. Purohit – aye

Mr. Wellinghoff – aye

Mr. Nolde – aye

Ms. Andersen – aye

The Committee voted 8-1, the motion carried.

Article 4 - Small Business Grant Program: Selectman Jon Benson spoke on behalf of the article, which raises and appropriates \$165,604 to provide up to \$4,000 in financial relief for Acton small businesses (with qualifying eligibility criteria). Mr. Benson asked Land Use and Economic Development Director Matthew “Selby,” Judi Romatelli (Proprieter, Periwinkle Glassworks), Anita Opitz and Heidi Ziegahn (Michael’s Shoe Store), and Kyra Marino (Proprieter, Community Revolution Yoga) to provide additional insight into the proposed program and its impact. Director Selby provided a brief conceptual overview of the development of the program and the proposed eligibility criteria. The program was initially proposed to use \$100,000 in CARES Act funding (The Town was notified later that this was no longer an eligible expense). 43 eligible applicants from the initial program (pre-DOR

notification) were evaluated and 25 businesses were selected in a random lottery. The proposed appropriation would provide financial support for the 43 applicants.

Mr. Majors noted the Economic Development Committee supports this program.

Ms. Romatelli, Ms. Opitz, Ms. Ziegahn, and Ms. Marino each briefly shared stories of each of the businesses they operate in town, and how impactful the grant program will be for their respective businesses.

Ms. Russell inquired about the business's preparations for potential future government shutdowns. Ms. Romatelli replied they are actively working through online mediums, such as their website and social media to allow for continued interactions with the public, especially with the upcoming holiday season. Ms. Marino concurred, as the fitness industry has transitioned into online offerings and the community has been responsive to the changes.

Mr. Cole recognized the challenges the pandemic has presented for the community and thanked the speakers for their efforts. He noted his position against the article and does not believe the proposed article is the proper use of public funds to subsidize private enterprises, but rather the Town should adapt their policies to support the community (Example: allowing Jones Field to be used for yoga).

Ms. Purohit believes the proposed article is a strategic solution to support small businesses, noting recent social media postings highlighting vacant storefronts in town.

Mr. Noone expressed empathy for the business community's struggles during the pandemic, however, is not in favor of using local revenues for this purpose, noting there are several other members of the community that could use assistance as well.

Mr. Majors supports the proposed article. He believes the Town should do its part to support local businesses in the community.

Mr. Nolde supports the sentiment of the proposed article but believes a post-pandemic business relief program may be more appropriate.

Mr. Cole moved to not recommend the article. There was no audible second. Chair Andersen called the roll:

Ms. Russell – aye

Mr. Cole – aye

Mr. Noone – aye

Mr. Majors – nay

Ms. Purohit – nay

Mr. Bourdon – aye

Mr. Wellinghoff – nay

Mr. Nolde – aye

Ms. Andersen – nay

The Committee voted 5-4, the motion carried.

Article 3 - Authorize Payment in Lieu of Taxes – Solar Facilities: Mr. Noone summarized the article, which authorizes the Town Manager to negotiate an agreement with a solar developer for a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement on Acton Water District property. Mr. Noone noted we have a similar existing agreement with a developer on the landfill located at the Transfer Station. Selectman Jim Snyder-Grant followed-up with additional details, including the proposed construction timeline of both proposed locations (16 Knox Trail and 28 Lawsbrook Road). Mr. Snyder-Grant noted the Town currently receives no revenue for these properties, however, the proposed agreement will arrange for scheduled revenues, estimated around \$40,000 to \$60,000 each year for 20 years, and will be approved by the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Noone moved to recommend the article. Mr. Bourdon seconded. Chair Andersen called the roll:

- Ms. Russell – aye
- Mr. Noone – aye
- Mr. Majors – aye
- Ms. Purohit – aye
- Mr. Bourdon – aye
- Mr. Wellinghoff – aye
- Mr. Cole – aye
- Mr. Nolde – aye
- Ms. Andersen – aye

The Committee voted unanimously in favor, the motion carried.

Article 1 - Land Acquisition – 4 Piper Lane, 6 Piper Lane, 4 Piper Lane Rear, and Right of Way over 90 School Street: Mr. Nolde summarized the article, which is a \$1.2 million acquisition of four parcels for conservation purposes adjacent to the Great Hill Conservation property.

Ms. Russell inquired if any of the property will be used for housing purposes and inquired why the acquisition by the Town has been identified now. Selectman Dean Charter replied the Town has sought to negotiate for the acquisition of the property in prior years, however, was unsuccessfully able to do so. Additionally, the Community Preservation Committee has endorsed the acquisition with the condition the property will be used for conservation and open space purposes, and the language in the warrant will clarify the property will be used for open space.

Mr. Noone asked if the property has been appraised. Mr. Charter noted an appraisal has been completed, and the proposed purchase price is lower than the declared appraisal amount.

Mr. Nolde moved to recommend the article. Mr. Bourdon seconded. Chair Andersen called the roll:

- Ms. Russell – aye
- Mr. Noone – aye
- Mr. Majors – aye
- Ms. Purohit – aye

Mr. Bourdon – aye
Mr. Wellinghoff – aye
Mr. Cole – aye
Mr. Nolde – aye
Ms. Andersen – aye
The Committee voted unanimously in favor, the motion carried.

Article 6 - Accept Legislation – Statutory Speed Limits and Regulatory Safety Zones: Ms. Russell summarized the article, which authorizes the Board of Selectmen through statute to establish speed limits of 25 miles per hour on town roadways in certain areas.

Ms. Russell moved to recommend the article. Mr. Cole seconded. Chair Andersen called the roll:

Ms. Russell – aye
Mr. Noone – aye
Mr. Majors – aye
Ms. Purohit – aye
Mr. Bourdon – aye
Mr. Cole – aye
Mr. Wellinghoff – aye
Mr. Nolde – aye
Ms. Andersen – aye
The Committee voted unanimously in favor, the motion carried.

Article 7 - Accept Legislation – Saturday Office Hours: Mr. Bourdon summarized the article, which allows for the Town Clerk’s office to treat Saturday’s as Sundays. For example, if the voter registration deadline closes on a Saturday, the Clerk’s must remain open until 8 pm on that day. If the Town accepts this legislation, the Clerk’s office will have the authority to extend that deadline to the next available business day.

Mr. Bourdon moves to recommend the article. Ms. Russell seconded. Chair Andersen called the roll:

Ms. Russell – aye
Mr. Noone – aye
Mr. Majors – aye
Ms. Purohit – aye
Mr. Bourdon – aye
Mr. Wellinghoff – aye
Mr. Cole – aye
Mr. Nolde – aye
Ms. Andersen – aye
The Committee voted unanimously in favor, the motion carried.

Article 5 - Non-Binding Resolution – Declaring a Climate Emergency – A Better Future Starting Now: Chair Andersen summarized the article. The proposed article advocates for the community to support legislation which attempts to control statewide and local gas leaks and

coordinate with gas suppliers for continued surveying and monitoring. The article also encourages the community to advocate for non-fossil fuels. There will be no cost borne by the community.

Chair Andersen moves to make no recommendation on this article. Mr. Majors seconded. Chair Andersen called the roll:

- Ms. Russell – aye
- Mr. Noone – aye
- Mr. Majors – aye
- Ms. Purohit – aye
- Mr. Bourdon – aye
- Mr. Wellinghoff – aye
- Mr. Cole – aye
- Mr. Nolde – aye
- Ms. Andersen – aye

The Committee voted unanimously in favor, the motion carried.

Article 8 - Release of Restriction – 127 Strawberry Hill Road: Mr. Majors summarized the article, which releases a deed restriction and grants the Town an easement alongside Pope and Strawberry Hill Road and increases visibility for the community, with an attempt to make the intersection safer. The deed restriction will allow the property owner to sub-divide the property. There will be no cost borne by the community.

Mr. Majors moves to recommend the article. Mr. Noone seconded. Chair Andersen called the roll:

- Ms. Russell – aye
- Mr. Noone – aye
- Mr. Majors – aye
- Ms. Purohit – aye
- Mr. Bourdon – aye
- Mr. Cole – aye
- Mr. Wellinghoff – aye
- Mr. Nolde – aye
- Ms. Andersen – aye

The Committee voted unanimously in favor, the motion carried.

Article 9 - Amend Zoning Bylaw – Housekeeping Corrections, Personal Wireless Facility: Mr. Cole summarized the article, which amends existing bylaws to ensure language within the article is in line with statute.

Mr. Cole moves to recommend the article. Mr. Noone seconded. Chair Andersen called the roll:

- Ms. Russell – aye
- Mr. Noone – aye
- Mr. Majors – aye
- Ms. Purohit – aye

Mr. Bourdon – aye
Mr. Cole – aye
Mr. Wellinghoff – aye
Mr. Nolde – aye
Ms. Andersen – aye
The Committee voted unanimously in favor, the motion carried.

3. Departmental Updates

Mr. Brian McMullen, Assistant Finance Director informed the committee 96% of tax revenues have been collected thus far and finances remain stable with prior years.

Mr. Benson noted the Powder Mill Place project will take the community over the 10% safe harbor requirement, which should hold with the estimated 2020 Census numbers.

Chair Andersen introduced Esha Gangolli to the committee as the newest Associate member on the committee. Ms. Gangolli has been a resident since 2003, and has a Ph.D. in Molecular biology by training, and is currently working in the clinical development of cancer drugs at a biotechnology company. She is very excited to join the committee. Mr. Cole welcomed Ms. Gangolli, and noted her first meeting is on the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment.

Ms. Gangolli moved to adjourn. Mr. Cole seconded. Ms. Andersen called the roll:

Ms. Purohit – aye
Mr. Majors – aye
Ms. Russell - aye
Mr. Noone – aye
Mr. Cole – aye
Mr. Bourdon – aye
Mr. Wellinghoff – aye
Ms. Andersen – aye
The Committee voted 8-0, the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:33 PM.