

## Finance Committee meeting minutes

February 24, 2015 Town Hall Room 204 7:30pm

Members present Chairman Steve Noone, Vice Chair Mike Majors, Clerk, Margaret Woolley Busse, Doug Tindal, Mary Ann Ashton, Bob Evans, Herman Kabakoff, Bill Mullin  
Absent: Roland Bourdon

Steve Noone called the meeting to order at 7:32pm

- I. Public Participation: None heard
- II. Pay As You Throw Presentation: Corey York from Town Highway Department
  - a. Steve N: asked for clarification in the costs associated with the program.
  - b. Bill: Describe contract with trash movers. Corey: Trash goes to Western Mass to get incinerated. What about selling bags at Transfer station? Corey: Probably not.
  - c. Herman: Do we know if people will go to private haulers after PAYT implemented? Corey: Communities that have implemented it haven't seen a noticeable difference. What about larger items that don't fit into a bag? Corey: We need to find out what other communities do
  - d. Mike: How does the amount of trash actually get reduced? Corey: More goes into recycling, and people just more conscious of throwing things away
  - e. Margaret: Suggests maybe do education about composting, since food trash takes up a lot of space. Will the recycling ever be single stream? That would be much easier for people to do. Also, need to find a way to make it cheaper for seniors. Corey: No plans to convert to single stream recycling at this time. Also suggest looking at ways to make it cheaper for seniors.
  - f. Doug: Does the amount of recycling go up by the same amount as trash goes down? Corey: Typically it does not go up as much.
  - g. Bob: Would the town have to subsidize the enterprise fund because less revenue? Corey: No because cost of removing trash will go down as well.
  - h. Mary Ann: Will it be necessary to have additional staff at the transfer station? Corey: Possibly
  - i. Steve N. Suggests pick one scenario of reduced trash and figure out operational costs. Corey agreed to this
  - j. Jim Snyder-Grant, from Green Acton: This time, vs. 10 years ago [when similar program was voted down], we have data on how much trash we throw away. The other thing that's changed is that the sticker price is a lot more expensive, so it gives people a way to better control their costs. This new model is utility based—you pay for what you use.
  - k. Mike: should consider doing whole town curbside pickup—much more environmental, to have one truck driving around town picking up trash then hundreds of cars driving to the transfer station

- III. Updates on FY16 budgets: Steve N. Overall assessment didn't change too much for the Middlesex Retirement. Town side likely went up 29%, for schools assessment went down \$98000. Town Manager has proposed cuts that would compensate for increased assessment. But we won't know for sure what the numbers are until at least another few weeks.
  - a. Bob: A significant portion of what would have been paid to Middlesex has essentially been put into past turnbacks, and so therefore, perhaps the additional assessment should be paid for by an agreed upon % that would be paid by the Town and the rest by the reserves.
  - b. Doug: Agrees that additional funding should be paid for by reserves
  - c. Bill: believes we should let the Town Manager make the cuts he proposed
  - d. Margaret: Understands Bob's argument, but seems like if the Town Manager is fine with these cuts, is not putting up a fight on this, probably the cuts aren't too severe, and we should go with it.
  - e. Mary Ann: Supports the Town Manager's cuts; recommends going with the budget we have since that's all we have clarity about it.
  - f. Bob: Health Insurance Trust has voted on their rates: for active employees, rates going up 11% (rate at which we're paying for medical expenses for active employees), rate for senior program going down, so overall budget impact 7-8%, budgets had put in roughly 7%, so shouldn't be problematic for already-determined budget.
- IV. Acton Leadership Group guidance—Not much more to discuss
- V. Propose formal budget hearing will be March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Take formal vote on budgets then
  - a. Margaret: Question about fixed route transportation—Steve N. right now, in the consent agenda. Margaret: strongly recommends that it not be in the consent agenda—it's a big item and a new item, and should be discussed, partly because it's a good way to publicize the new program.
- VI. Finance Committee business
  - a. Preparation for Town Meeting: Additional warrant articles assigned
  - b. Minutes: MOTION--Bill moves to approve minutes from February 10, 2015, Herman seconds it. Motion approved unanimously
  - c. Committee reports: Herman gave a BoS update re: Next Generation lawsuit. Land court gets the final decision, and wants to hear from the Zoning Board of Appeals
- VII. Meeting adjourned unanimously at 9:37

Documents used: Presentation re: SMART/ PAYT