



Town of Acton Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: November 21st, 2016

Acton Public Safety Building • 7:30 pm

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Members in attendance: Bob Evans, Jason Cole, Mike Majors, Margaret Busse (Chair), Roland Bourdon, Shuyu Lee, Steve Noone, and Jon Benson (Associate).

Members absent: Doug Tindal (Vice-Chair), David Wellinghoff (Clerk), and Kristen Connell (Associate)

Other: Doug Halley, Brian McMullin

Chairwoman Busse called meeting to order

Public participation – None.

Approve minutes – There were no meeting minutes to approve.

Transportation Presentation – Doug Halley presented a number of slides focusing on the current state and the near term plan for transportation in town. He spoke of different services:

- 1.) Rail Shuttle: Pick up points at Mt Calvary Church and the West Acton Fire Station. Capacity on the Rail Shuttle is not gated by the seats on the van, but by the amount of parking available. Fees are listed in the guide he handed out and on the town website. Two main fees, parking and ride. You can ride without parking.
- 2.) Council on Aging, Dial a Ride, and Minute Van are door to door services. These services are up to almost 3,000 tips a quarter – a trip being defined as one rider in one direction. There have been less cancellations in bookings, and that is believed to be due to increased centralized booking coverage (Acton, Boxboro, Littleton, and Maynard are all part of the same dispatch center, with their own vans), meaning people are not booking trips “just in case” and then not riding since they are more

likely to get a hold of someone when/if they need to schedule a ride. Estimate is that there are probably only 150 unique individuals per month.

- 3.) Cross Acton Transit is a series of 11 pre-defined stops, running between 8am and 6pm, with an hour off for lunch at noon. This is almost a year old now, and appears to be most heavily utilized by student aged children during the summer months. Current utilization is about 400 riders/month with an expectation to grow to 500-600 riders/month in the next year. Interesting to note that more riders get on at K-mart than get off, and that is suspected to be students leaving the multi-school campus. Mike Majors asked if the pre-defined stops were reviewed from time to time, and the response was that they are, and given as an example is that the Council on Aging is now a request-only stop, not an automatic stop.
- 4.) Cross Town Connect is a multi-town service. Margaret asked if common destinations (i.e. Emerson Hospital) were aggregated together – it was stated that that is still a work in progress but does occur when possible. Businesses do not contribute to the town/services for having a stop near their location. There was brief conversation about asking for a contribution, but also some concern about being seen as hostile to business if we institute a fee. There are a couple of new commuter stops planned, but not in stone yet.

Budget Projection for FY'18 shows a reduction of tax subsidy of \$18,000 because of an anticipated increase in funding from the LRTA for the Cross Acton Transit.

Plan is to lease a vehicle for a purchase price of \$57,350 instead of paying a \$30,000/year lease without owning the vehicle at the end. Roland asked if buying a used vehicle was an option, but there was no clear commit one way or the other. Margaret asked if we had approached Uber for some of the door to door service. The answer is that we had approached them, and applied for a grant, but we didn't get approved as there is some question about if there was enough of a demand to create a profitable market in the suburbs. There is also the impediment of not guaranteeing handicap accessible vehicles through the Uber network. The cost to Acton per ride is on the order of \$22, which is a more favorable number than in the past, but Doug reminded us, "never said we are going to make it break even." Margaret asked for a five-year plan, and more information was promised to be forthcoming at Budget Saturday.

Updates from Other Committees :

Massachusetts Municipal Association: Mike Majors reported that the Commonwealth's first half of the year budgeting was pretty good, but that the second half of the year, was less than stellar. The mismatch in budgeted revenue accounted for the lack of a tax holiday weekend. The upshot is that there is little likelihood of increased local spending. Steve asked if there were expected to be 9c clawbacks and the response was that there was no official statement, but the general sentiment was to look for that. Mike also stated that

compared to other towns, our early and active contributions to OPEB are a solid positive for Acton. He pointed out that other towns, in particular Arlington, built an override into their 5 year plan and that part of their communication with the town is an executive-style dashboard of fiscal health. Brian stated that we used to have such a report but that it was discontinued a few years back. It was the sense of the committee that we would like to investigate a return of that report. Steve reminded us that the Department of Revenue website has good information under the local services section and the financial flexibility report.

Warrant Committee: None of the members were present.

Outreach Committee: Upcoming presentations of the PoV to the schools/COA are as follows:

Friday, January 13th at 9:30am for Conant – Bob and Mike

Tuesday, January 17th at 7:30pm for McCarthy-Towne – Margaret and Jason

Tuesday, January 24th at 7:30 for Douglas – Roland and Steve

Unconfirmed Tuesday, March, 21st for Gates – Jon and Shuyu

Either January 17th at 12:30pm or February 9th at 1pm for COA – Bob and Steve

Long Range Planning: No update, as there are no new numbers from the town.

School Committee: Due to be sent out in a separate email

Minuteman: By end of January, building plan will be complete and a construction manager, to be picked from the final pool of 8, will be selected. Building committee meetings are now twice a month instead of only once a month.

Acton 2020: No news about restarting the committee, though a meeting for Kelley's Corner was scheduled for 11/24.

Board of Selectmen: Shuyu reports that during the 10/31 meeting, 4 Cherry Ridge Road is going to be built out for affordable housing. No special meeting will be called to force Belmont to stay in the Minuteman region. Change in Nursing Advisory Committee charge has been approved. 11/1 meeting was about the Nagog Water treatment plant and that Acton has asked for a wildlife study and will follow up with a request for an archeologic study as well. This will delay the project, but should allow time to review the documentation provided by Concord with very little time prior to the last hearing. 11/7 meeting dealt with a review of the PoV and with capital requests, as follows: parking expansion at NARA for \$160k, and for more restrooms for \$155k. Morrisson farm is asking for \$26k. Total of \$391k in applications. Dog park was denied. \$315k total is the request

from the town, though I am not sure where the money for Morrison farm is to come from or if it was denied.

Town Capital Committee: Visited a bunch of buildings. For the most part, they are in decent shape, but they are all getting older and are starting to have condition issues. Worried about code update triggers like in the schools. New roof at the library is a near term issue. Leary field turf replacement is on the list from the schools.

Review of the Tri-Board Meeting: Jon asked to speak at the onset of this segment, and he led with, "I would stand by the comments made, but I sincerely regret having made them during the meeting and apologize to the committee for doing so." Margaret thanked him for his apology. Steve commented that we are way ahead of year's past since other groups have clearly read and reacted to our PoV early enough in the cycle to allow time to work through any differences. Roland stated that he appreciated hearing the different entities' goals. Roland suggested we do this twice a year. Mike felt it was helpful to meet the other personalities. Shuyu stated he was happy we had our PoV in draft form. Margaret asked in the future that we wait for feedback before speaking at multi-board meetings and requested that we be more conscious of allowing other board members the chance to speak.

With regard to the PoV, there were three items discussed. Revisiting the upper and lower threshold limits for reserves. Declaring an expected turnback. Unused Tax levy. It was determined not to adjust our language on the upper and lower limit for reserves. Asking for an explicit amount of budgeted turnback was voted down with 4 votes for implicit, 2 votes for explicit and at least one abstention. Untaxed levy is still to be left untouched. Any use of reserves is expected to be for capital improvements, and we respectfully request that the town and the school district provide a prioritized list of projects.

It was stated that the Boxboro FINCOM requested a joint meeting. Margaret is investigating a meeting in May.

Next Meeting is scheduled for December 13th.

Meeting adjourned at 9:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jason Cole
Finance Committee