

Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

January 25, 2022

Remote Meeting via Zoom

In Attendance: J. Strehle, G. Danis, D. Anderson, B. Black, D. Cooper, R. Curley, K. Dziergowski, M. Goulet, C. Kirk, A. McElaney, S. Melia, E. Sheehan, T. Sherwood, Town Accountant S. Nickerson.

Absent: A. Macdonald, N. MacDonald

1. Call Meeting to Order in Joint Session with the Select Board on Community Preservation Committee Recommendations

Select Board Chair Joe Fisher called the Select Board meeting to order at 6:00 pm and read the following statement: "This meeting is being held remotely as an alternate means of public access pursuant to an Order issued by the Governor of Massachusetts dated March 12, 2020, Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify the Chairman at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the chair may inform all other participants of said recording."

Advisory Committee Chair Strehle called the AdCom to order at 6:01 pm and adopted the statement read by Select Board Chair. The AdCom joined the Select Board to hear a presentation by the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) on their proposed FY23 grants.

The CPC has \$1,764,703 in available funds for disbursement for FY23. This is made up of \$1,203,418 from Hingham real estate taxes; \$463,862 in State Match, and \$97,423 in monies not spent in previous years.

The Committee recommends the following allocations:

- A grant of \$20,000 for the CPC Administrative Fund, an annual allocation that covers administrative expenses of the CPC. The CPC vote was unanimous.
- A grant of \$571,320 for the Lehner Land debt service. There was discussion regarding the CPC's decision to pay more than the required debt principal payment. The CPC voted 5-4 to make an excess principal payment of \$267,964 which, when added to the required debt service, amounts to 34% of CPC's available funds this year. AdCom members Mr. Anderson, Mr. Goulet, Ms. Melia, and Ms. Cooper noted that this year, where certain CPC projects are either under-funded versus the proponents' request, or not funded at all, the benefit to the taxpayer residents of excess pre-payment of debt principal were unclear. Former Select Board Chair Mary Power commented that the process by which CPC assesses the merits of accelerating debt paydown should be examined.
- A grant of \$166,728 for the Benjamin Lincoln House debt repayment. This debt payment is also more than the debt service schedule; however, it is also the only Historic project this year and required additional payments to meet the required 10% CPC allocation. The CPC vote was unanimous.
- A grant of \$166,840 for the Habitat for Humanity project on Whiting Street. The CPC vote for this project was unanimous.
- A grant of \$550,000 for construction of a new pool complex at the South Shore Country Club. The CPC vote for this project was 5-4; all committee members agreed to support the project, but a consensus was not reached regarding the level of funding granted.

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- A grant of \$289,815 for the Cronin Field Hockey Court replacement. The CPC vote was 7-2.

2. At the conclusion of the Joint Session, the Advisory Committee will recess and resume its regular meeting using the AdCom meeting login

Chair Strehle reconvened the Advisory Committee meeting at 7:20pm.

3. Comments from the Public Regarding Items Not on the Agenda

None.

4. FY23 Budget Discussion

Chair Strehle began the FY23 budget discussion with an overview of last year's budget decisions and what steps the Town and the AdCom have taken since Town Meeting 2021 to prepare for this year's budget deliberations. She noted that Town Meeting 2021 used \$2.4MM from Fund Balance and \$2.6MM in federal stimulus funds to fill the revenue gap needed to achieve a balanced budget for FY22. The Town used these funds to pass a level services budget for most Departments and approved 32 FTEs for the schools and 4 FTEs for municipal departments. In the Report of the Advisory Committee to ATM 2021, AdCom recommended that the Town would benefit from a long-term financial management plan. Subsequently, the Town Administrator created the Sustainable Budget Task Force to review current revenue sources, analyze revenue opportunities – including an operational override - and provide recommendations to the Town. Chair Strehle noted that since the beginning of FY22 the AdCom has been preparing diligently for the upcoming discussions. This has included a meeting with the Town's bond advisors (Capital Markets Advisors) for a bond rating discussion, completing an overview of our Financial Policy, and reviewing the Fund Balance Memo as well as preliminary forecast numbers with Town Accountant Sue Nickerson. AdCom has also met with the Personnel Board to understand the implications of the govHR equity adjustments undertaken this year as well as the collective bargaining agreements signed. AdCom members provided preliminary thoughts on the upcoming budget season. AdCom members expressed agreement in their desire to hear the recommendations from the Sustainable Budget Task Force.

5. Warrant Article Hearings

Article A: Hannah Lincoln Whiting Fund/Trustees of the Bathing Beach

Mr. Goulet presented an overview of this Article. The Article recommends reelecting Laura Boyle for the Hannah Lincoln Whiting Fund and electing Adrienne Ramsey to the Trustees of the Bathing Beach to fulfill a vacant position.

Article B: Assume Liability for DCR

Mr. Goulet provided an overview of this Article. He noted that passage of this Article is required for the DCR to do any work in Town and only covers work done by the DCR.

Article C: Reports of Various Town Committees

Ms. Melia provided an overview of this Article. She noted that there are no committees being discharged this year.

Article H: Disbursement of Electric Light Department Receipts

Ms. Kirk provided an overview of this Article. The Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) is a calculated number and is expected to be ~\$500,000 this year. Mr. Curley noted that the HMLP has a healthy balance in their revolving fund. Ms. Black noted that the balance

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currently in the fund is anticipated to be used for the new transmission line HMLP is currently working on.

Article I: Building Department Revolving Fund

Ms. Sherwood provided an overview of this Article. The current balance in the Building Department Revolving Fund \$460,000. This Fund is specific to all fees collected for and expenses associated with plumbing, gas, and electrical inspections. This Article would limit the total amount that may be spent from this Fund to \$350,000.

Article L: Acceptance of Easements

Ms. Melia provided an overview of this Article. She noted that this is only for easements that are being offered at no cost to the Town and is typically used for Public Works projects.

6. Advisory Committee Handbook Update Vote

Version 13 of the Handbook was approved by roll call vote, 12-0.

7. Liaison Reports

a. ACES

Mr. Anderson reported that the School Administration has completed its budget hearings and that there are no substantive changes in the budget since the January 4th version.

b. Hingham Affordable Housing Trust

Ms. Dziergowski reported that Article DD is on the Warrant to transfer land from the Select Board to the HAHT. She noted that a similar Article was submitted for the FY21 Warrant but was not in the final version as there were outstanding questions from abutters regarding easements and additional soil work was requested to ensure buildability. The easement issues have been resolved. Soil work is being done pro bono by Margetts. The results from these preliminary tests will determine if the Article stays in this year's Warrant. There are subsequent tests that will be needed if the land is transferred but the Trust will bear those costs. Ms. Dziergowski also reported that the Trust is working with the Planning Department to ensure the accuracy of the number of units in Town deemed affordable.

8. Discussion of Advisory Committee Housekeeping Items

The Sustainable Budget Task Force will present its Final Report to the Select Board on February 1st. The Advisory Committee, School Committee and Capital Outlay will join this meeting.

9. Matters not anticipated within 48 hours of meeting

Ms. Cooper reported that the actual assessment number for SSRECC have been posted and the FY23 assessment is \$991,419.24, an increase of \$50,237.24 (5.35%). This is an increase from our placeholder number in the original budget discussion.

10. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by roll call vote 12-0.

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Documents Distributed for this Meeting

- Agenda
- 2022 Warrant Articles
- AdCom Article Assignments
- Warrant Article Draft Versions - Articles A, B, C, H, I, L

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy MacDonald
Advisory Committee Secretary

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