

## **Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Date: January 28, 2020**

**Place: Town Hall**

In attendance: Committee Members Victor Baltera, Bob Curley, Julie Strehle, Eryn Kelley, George Danis, Libby Claypoole, Evan Sheehan, Andy McElaney, Davalene Cooper, Dave Anderson, Nancy MacDonald, Kathleen Almand, and Town Accountant Sue Nickerson.

Absent: Tom Belyea, Eric Haskell, Ed Gaydos.

Chairman Baltera called the meeting to order at 7:32 pm.

***Comments from the public regarding items not on the Agenda*** None

### ***Approval of Minutes from January 21, 2020 meeting***

Minutes of the Meeting held on 1/21/2020 were approved with revisions by a vote of 11-0.

### ***Liaison Reports***

#### Schools - Dave Anderson

ACES and several other AdCom members met with the School Committee, Superintendent Dr. Paul Austin, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Jamie LaBillois, and Director of Business and Support Services John Ferris on Sunday, 1/26/2020, to review the proposed school budget. While Superintendent Dr. Austin recognizes budget constraints, he also recognizes the duty to identify needs for the district. He has created a stratified budget request, with levels of "Status Quo Base Budget" (budget increase of 4.4%), "Fully Funded Fundamental and Structural Needs" (11.62% increase), "Critical Needs" (8.77% increase), "Highly Critical Needs" (6.78% increase), and "Most Critical Needs" (6.15% increase). The slides from the presentation which explain these requests are now on the School Department's website. AdCom members are encouraged to review these slides ahead of the education budget hearing with the BOS on 2/11/2020.

The slides also contain data on benchmark student enrollment and performance data. While students are achieving high results at the highest academic levels, such as AP exams, there is concern about lagging resources for students in the middle of the performance scale, especially in math. AdCom members discussed "per pupil" spending and the latest data which shows the Town at the bottom of the scale which compares "per pupil" spending in benchmark communities. Libby Claypoole suggested studying the school department funding of towns in the middle of the benchmark range to determine whether the inputs to calculate "per pupil" spending are comparable to those of the Town. Hingham spends less than other towns on Administration, which is a number in the per pupil calculation. In addition, Hingham funds school technology out of the capital budget, which is not reflected in the "per pupil" expenditures. The Town does not fully fund all-day Kindergarten, which further affects the "per pupil" numbers.

George Danis noted that the School Department is also concerned about capital spending, and the annual spending needs on technology (\$400,000 - \$500,000 each year), which leaves only \$500,000 to spend on building systems and structural needs. Mr. Ferris had stated at the meeting on 1/26/2020 that the schools need \$1.5 million annually in capital funds to properly maintain and repair buildings, a figure which also includes a proposed move of ongoing technology expenses out of the capital budget into the operating budget.

There is a warrant article to augment feasibility study money for Foster School. Another warrant article requests funds to repair Building 179, in order to host programs such as Hingham High School's TRACES program, which were displaced from the closing of Building 12.

***Correspondence Received Concerning School Budget***

The committee acknowledged receipt of correspondence from citizens urging increased funding for the school budget.

The Committee took a brief recess at 8:02 pm to relocate to attend a joint hearing with the Board of Selectmen.

***Joint Hearing with Board of Selectmen on Community Preservation Recommendations***

The Advisory Committee reconvened at 8:11 pm in joint session with the Board of Selectmen to hear the recommendations of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) for awards of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to be voted on at Town Meeting. CPC Chair Larry Lindner and Vice Chair Dan White presented the recommendations. The CPC made the following recommendations for funding:

- Hingham Affordable Housing Trust (HAHT) - \$272,300. These funds enable the HAHT to take advantage of opportunities to acquire properties for affordable housing.
- Tennis Courts at Plymouth River School - \$75,000. These funds would enable the Recreation Department to resurface the tennis courts to remove dangerous cracks.
- Second Parish Clock Tower - \$32,030. These funds would enable the Second Parish church community to restore and repair the clock faces on the clock tower.
- Pool at the South Shore Country Club - Design and Construction Documents - \$500,000. These funds would enable the South Shore Country Club to design and create construction documents for a new pool, to replace the old, failed pool.
- Lehner Land Improvements - \$8,000. These funds would permit a resurvey of the Lehner land, install two kiosks for maps, and install fencing posts forty feet apart to delineate boundaries along the western and northern edge of the private residence at 72 South Pleasant Street.
- Benjamin Lincoln House - \$772,000. These funds would represent a portion of the funds needed by the Hingham Historical Society to purchase the house for the purposes of historical preservation as a museum.
- Canterbury Street Cemetery - \$40,000. These funds would be used to clear and clean up the cemetery area, and repair headstones.
- Lehner Property Debt Service - \$356,000. After this payment, the remaining debt for the acquisition of the Lehner Property will be approximately \$3.1 million.
- Heritage Museum Debt Service - \$133,000. After this payment, the remaining debt on the Heritage Museum will be retired.

Following the joint meeting and a brief recess, the Committee reconvened at 8:33 pm to continue its meeting agenda.

### ***Warrant Article Hearings and Votes***

A – Hannah Lincoln Whiting Fund – Davalene Cooper provided an overview of this Article, Comment, and a favorable recommendation to reappoint Karen Sadlon to the Committee which has charge of the Fund. The vote to approve the recommendation was 11-0.

B – Assume Liability for DCR – Andy McElaney provided an overview of this Article, Comment, and a favorable recommendation. This Article calls for the Town to assume liability for damages that may be incurred by work to be performed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and authorizes the Board of Selectmen to execute and deliver an indemnity bond to the Commonwealth. The vote to approve the recommendation was 11-0.

C – Report of Various Town Committees - Kathleen Almand provided an overview of this Article, Comment, and a favorable recommendation. This Article recommends that the Town receive the reports of Town Committees, Commissions and the Historian, and recommends that the work of these posts and committees be continued. The vote to approve the recommendation was 11-0.

G – Transfer from Stabilization Fund – Kathleen Almand provided an overview of this Article, Comment, and a favorable recommendation. This Article provides for the transfer of \$178,836 from the Stabilization Fund for the purpose of reducing the FY21 tax rate. The vote to approve the recommendation was 11-0.

H - Disbursement of Electric Light Department Receipts - Andy McElaney provided an overview of this Article, Comment, and a favorable recommendation. This Article transfers to the Town's general fund the amount of the PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) to be paid to the Town for the FY21, and appropriates all other funds collected by HMLP to be expended by the manager at the direction of the Municipal light board. Any unexpended balance at the end of the fiscal year is to be directed to the construction fund of the Light Plant. A committee member asked about the history of unexpended balance, including the amount (if any) left over each year, and what is done with it. Mr. McElaney will research and report back to AdCom. The vote to approve the recommendation was 11-0.

I – Building Department Revolving Fund – Nancy MacDonald provided an overview of this Article, Comment, and a favorable recommendation. This Article provides a cap of \$350,000 on transfers from this fund, which is used to pay the salaries of plumbing, gas, and electrical inspectors, plus a portion of the Building Commissioner's salary (as it relates to plumbing, gas, and electrical matters). There was a discussion on whether funds from the revolving fund could be used for any other part of the budget, however there are restrictions on the use of these funds. The revolving fund was used to purchase a department vehicle last year and this year, for use by the inspectors. The vote to approve the recommendation was 11-0.

J – Department of Elder Services Revolving Fund – Nancy MacDonald provided an overview of this Article, Comment, and a favorable recommendation. This article provides a cap of \$80,000 on transfers from this fund, which is used to pay expenses associated with programs for senior residents. The vote to approve the recommendation was 11-0.

L – Acceptance of Easements – Nancy MacDonald provided an overview of this Article, Comment, and a favorable recommendation. This Article authorizes the Board of Selectmen to accept easements voluntarily granted to the Town for the purposes of streets, sidewalks, or pedestrian walkways, or water, drainage, sewage, or utility facilities. The vote to approve the recommendation was 11-0.

U - COLA Adjustment for Retirees - Davalene Cooper provided an overview of this Article, Comment, and a favorable recommendation. This Article authorizes the Hingham Retirement Board to increase the maximum base on which the COLA (Cost-of-living-Adjustment) is calculated from \$13,000 to \$14,000. Each year, the Retirement Board compares its COLA base amount to that of 104 community retirement boards, with the goal to set an amount somewhere in the middle of the range. If the new COLA base of \$14,000 is approved by Town Meeting, the appropriations increase of \$93,600 for FY21 will have to be transferred from available funds to meet the FY21 obligation. The vote to approve the recommendation was 11-0.

***Discussion of Advisory Committee Housekeeping Items***

Victor Baltera reminded Adcom members that documents need to have the correct footer, and that drafts of articles should be sent to the editors as soon as possible. Bob Curley is putting together the WASS. Other articles will be assigned this weekend. Since the BOS is not meeting next week, AdCom won't have articles to hear during that time. Meetings for 2/4/2020 and 2/6/2020 are canceled, and there may be a need to meet during the week of February vacation. The meeting on 2/11/2020 will include a joint hearing with BOS on the school budget. The AdCom hearing on CPC articles will be held on 2/13/2020. AdCom year-end party is set for 6/7/2020 from 4 - 6 pm.

***Matters Not Anticipated within 48 Hours of the Meeting*** - None

Adjourn - 9:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Julie Strehle, Secretary

List of Documents Distributed at this Meeting:

Agenda

Draft Minutes of Meeting 1/21/2020

Budget Scorecard updated through 1/21/2020

Community Preservation Committee Recommendations for ATM 2020

Articles A, B, C, G, H, I, J, L, U, GG, HH

AdCom approved 02/11/2020