

# Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

**Date: March 23, 2021**

**Place: Remote Meeting via Zoom**

**In attendance:** Committee Members Bob Curley, Julie Strehle, Andy McElaney, Evan Sheehan, Dave Anderson, Davalene Cooper, Kristin Dziergowski, Victor Baltera, Tina Sherwood, Alan Macdonald, Brenda Black, Libby Claypoole, Eryn Kelley, Nancy MacDonald, George Danis, and Town Accountant Sue Nickerson.

**Absent:** No one

1. **Call meeting to order:** Chair Curley called the meeting to order at 7:01 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.

2. **Comments from the public on items not on the agenda:** None

3. **Budget Hearing and Recommendation:**

a. **Community Planning Budget:** Victor Baltera presented this budget and recommended the following amounts:

Category	FY 22 request	\$ change to FY 21	% change
Salaries	\$166,861	\$2,462	1.5%
Expenses	\$24,205	\$2,500	11.5%
Total	\$191,066	\$4,962	2.7%

Mr. Baltera noted that the Community Planning Department provides staff for the Planning Board and oversees planning activities in Town. He further noted that the two employees in the Community Planning Department both left in December 2020 and a temporary, part time employee along with the Town real estate counsel, is currently fulfilling some of the duties of the former staff. The Director relocated to Florida and the Administrative Assistant transferred to a position in the School Department. Mr. Baltera added that Town Administrator

Tom Mayo is planning to restructure this Department and has requested additional funding for a senior planner as part of this process.

**4. *Warrant Articles hearings and potential votes:***

- a. Article D- Report of the Personnel Board: Alan Macdonald presented this Article which includes the biennial update of the Wage and Classification Study. This study covers 88 non-union and non-contract professional position employees of the Town. The study compares the salary structure, including steps, of Hingham and its benchmark communities. The results of the study are that 20 employees will be receiving an adjustment to their salaries, \$144,169 in total. Also, the salary step schedule will be updated to include additional steps.

The Advisory Committee voted 14-0-0 in favor of the Article.

- b. Article E- Salaries of Town Officers: Kristin Dziergowski presented this Article which details the salaries paid to Town Officers. There is no change to the existing salary structure.

The Advisory Committee voted 14-0-0 in favor of the Article.

- c. Article K- Transfer Funds to the Reserve Fund: Victor Baltera presented this Article. There will be a supplemental recommendation at Town Meeting for this Article which moves funds into the Reserve Fund to cover expenses in excess of the existing Reserve Fund balance. The reserve fund for FY 21 was set at \$629,100; to date there have been no expenditures from the reserve fund. There is no vote on this Article since the amount of funds to be transferred, if any, is unknown at this time.

- d. Article Q- Citizens Petition to Amend the By-laws: Gender Neutral Terms: Davalene Cooper presented an update to this Article which had been heard by the AdCom at its March 18, 2021 meeting. Based on comments made at the initial hearing, and after consulting with Town Counsel, Ms. Cooper made changes to the Comment and Recommended Motion sections of the Article.

The Advisory Committee voted 14-0-0 in favor of the Article.

- e. Article U- Plymouth River School Window Authorization to Borrow: Dave Anderson presented an update to the Comment section. The AdCom initially heard this Article at its March 11, 2021 meeting. Mr. Anderson reported that the School Department is still waiting on a final cost estimate for the project and that the AdCom would present a Supplemental Recommendation at Town Meeting based on the latest cost estimate for the project.

- f. Article W- Transfer Harbor Revenues to Municipal Waterways Fund: Libby Claypoole presented an update to the Comment and Recommended Motion on this Article. The AdCom had initially heard this Article at its March 4, 2021 meeting and requested clarification on the funds to be transferred and any potential budgetary implications from the transfer. Ms. Claypoole clarified the source of the funds and that there would be no impact on the FY 22 budget. The Advisory Committee voted 14-0-0 in favor of the Article.
- g. Article Y- HMLP Transmission and Substation Distribution Facilities: Eryn Kelley presented an overview and a Recommended Motion of “no-action” for this Article which the AdCom had initially discussed at its March 18, 2021 meeting.

The Advisory Committee voted 14-0-0 no-action on this Article.

- h. Article AAA- Amend Zoning By-law: Update to Floodplain Protection Overlay District: Victor Baltera presented this Article with assistance from Planning Board Member Gordon Carr and Town Real Estate Counsel Susan Murphy. The Article seeks to update the existing Floodplain Regulations and Maps with new Maps and Regulations as required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Article AAA and Article CCC have been combined at the recommendation of Town Counsel. Previously, Article AAA included only the textual changes to the new Regulations while Article CCC included only the changes to the Maps. Article AAA now includes both the text and Map changes contained in the new Regulations and Article CCC has been deleted from the Warrant. Mr. Baltera noted that he was proposing in the Recommended Motion a few clarifications from the language voted by the Planning Board.

The Advisory Committee voted 14-0-0 in favor of the Article.

- i. Article DDD- Citizens Petition: Amend Zoning By-law: Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU): Andy McElaney presented this Article which seeks to amend the existing By-law, which requires an ADU to be attached to the main residence, to allow an ADU to be detached from the main residence on a lot. The Planning Board (PB) voted no-action unanimously on the Article while also voting unanimously to establish a study committee to further review issues around ADU’s. The PB felt the existing By-law was too new to change as only 13 permits had been issued in the three years since the By-law went into effect. The PB felt that more time was needed to study whether to permit detached ADU’s and to understand all of the issues surrounding the proposed change.

The Advisory Committee voted to establish a study committee by a vote of 14-0-0 on this Article.

**5. Education budget recommendation from ACES:**

Dave Anderson presented the School budget recommendation from the ACES sub-committee. The sub-committee recommended fully funding the School budget as presented by Superintendent of Schools Dr. Paul Austin in his March 8, 2021 presentation to the School Committee. The budget recommended by Mr. Anderson is for a gross amount of \$61,792,079. The gross amount will be reduced by approximately \$1.4 million in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Recovery Funding (ESSR) 2 and 3 funds.

In reaching its recommendation the ACES sub-committee agreed on the following statements which were incorporated in Mr. Anderson's remarks:

- Fully fund the School budget as recommended by the School Administration;
- Learning and social emotional issues caused by the pandemic necessitate higher than normal spending;
- The School budget includes \$5.0 million in one-time funding with much of this funding being used to hire additional teachers. This creates an issue for the FY 23 budget in that additional revenue will need to be found, possibly through an override, in order to avoid drastic expense reduction, including staff reductions;
- The ACES team stated that the Town needed to control the growth in expenses and to better match revenue with expense growth.

Chair Curley noted that the Town was still receiving information on how the Federal Funds contained in the American Rescue Plan Act could be spent. He further stated that the Town would use Fund Balance as a backstop if Federal Funds prohibited some of the planned expenditures in order to fully fund the School budget.

**6. Further discussion of Forecast, Financial Policy, Fund Balance, overrides and debt exclusions, budget review and vote procedures:**

Chair Curley outlined the approach the AdCom would follow during the March 25, 2021 budget reconciliation meeting:

- Review regular budget spending requests;
- Review additional budget requests;
- Discuss regular and additional requests;
- Vote. Members who wish to discuss a specific budget, or request, will indicate their desire by placing a "hold" on the budget or request.

**7. Review and approval of Minutes from Meeting of March 9, 2021:** Approved, with edits by a roll call vote of 14-0-0.

**8. Liaison reports:**

- a. Libby Claypoole noted that the Capital Outlay Committee has a meeting scheduled for March 26, 2021 to address any issues raised during the AdCom budget reconciliation meeting to be held on March 25, 2021;
- b. Chair Curley noted that the BOS was voting budgets at its March 23, 2021 meeting. He further noted that the BOS and School Committee would be in attendance during the AdCom budget reconciliation meeting.

**9. Discussion of Advisory Committee housekeeping items:**

- a. Chair Curley noted that after this week the AdCom would most likely not need to meet until April 27, 2021;
- b. Chair Curley further noted that there were no updates to the schedule for Town Meeting or Town Elections;
- c. Chair Curley reminded all members to forward approved Warrant Articles to the editors.

**10. Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn at 9:53 pm approved by roll call vote of 14-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

George Danis, Secretary

List of Documents Distributed for this Meeting:

- Agenda
- Warrant Articles
- March 9, 2021 meeting minutes
- ACES note and School budget recommendation
- Dr. Paul Austin letter describing budget additions and programs
- Citizen email's regarding Warrant Articles

Approved with revisions on 04/27/2021 by roll call vote 12-0-0 (Libby Claypoole, Tina Sherwood and Evan Sheehan were absent for the vote).