

Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: June 30, 2020

Place: Remote Meeting via Zoom

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

Absent: None.

Chairman Baltera called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm. He 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."

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

Approval of minutes

Minutes of the Meeting held on 6/11/2020 were approved with revisions by a roll call vote of 14-0.

Minutes of the Meeting held on 6/14/2020 were approved by a roll call vote of 10-0-4 (with abstentions from Eric Haskell, Tom Belyea, Evan Sheehan, and Davalene Cooper, who were not present at the meeting).

Minutes of the Meeting held on 6/20/2020 were approved with revisions by a roll call vote of 14-0.

Debriefing on Budget, Warrant, and Town Meeting processes

Chairman Baltera solicited feedback on the Budget, Warrant, and Town Meeting processes. For the budget process, Nancy MacDonald expressed support for the powerpoint presentation that accompanies each department's budget request, which details department accomplishments, goals, and challenges. Tom Belyea appreciated Assistant Town Administrator Michelle Monsegur's presentation of small budgets which may not always have a representative to attend the hearing. Bob Curley pointed out that although the budget process has worked well up to this point, the Town may have to look at the process for FY21 because of the pandemic and financial pressures. For next fiscal year, the Town Administrator may have to solicit budgets in a different way, such as amounts for level services and amounts for less than level services. Evan Sheehan felt that the multiple nights of hearings on small budgets was inefficient. Ms. MacDonald disagreed with Mr. Curley's suggestion of "less than level services", citing that the Town has a revenue problem, not a spending problem, and there is very little growth in these budgets from year to year. Davalene Cooper voiced her support for review of all budgets, even small ones, because it provides context and training to new committee members.

Kathleen Almand reflected that, as a new member, she felt uncertain about what role AdCom plays in the budget, because by the time a department budget hearing occurs before AdCom, there isn't much for AdCom to do. Due to budget challenges for the next fiscal year, she hopes that the Town Administrator will communicate to AdCom a clear expectation of AdCom's role, and if AdCom will be required to perform extra due diligence. Dave Anderson agreed that the review of small budgets is a good learning experience for new AdCom members, and values the interaction with Town employees. Mr. Anderson continued that he felt that the revenue conversation conducted at AdCom's meeting on June 11, 2020, was important, and that AdCom will need to continue more real time conversations about the trajectory of revenue. AdCom can play an

important role and give ideas based on experience. Mr. Sheehan agreed about the importance of revenue conversations, and would like more opportunities to do that with elected officials, if possible.

George Danis voiced his concern over the tight budgets that the Town has faced over the past three years, and worries about what kind of opportunities the Town may not be pursuing because it doesn't have enough personnel to engage in that activity. For example, with the change in school Superintendent, the Town was presented with a new multi-layer budget, identifying the needed funding. In terms of revenue, Mr. Danis wonders what funding the Town really needs to run efficiently and provide the level of services required. Ed Gaydos noted that while he found the budget review process to be painfully repetitive and detailed, he began to see the value over time of the multiple reviews. By the time the budgets reach AdCom, they are in really good shape. Libby Claypoole expressed her interest in how revenues will come in throughout FY21, and what changes will be necessary during the budget cycle on both the operating and capital sides of the budget. Ms. Cooper wondered whether the instruction to department heads to provide a level services budget leaves any ability for department heads to think of any different or useful innovations. Andy McElaney cautioned AdCom liaisons to be open to voicing concern or disagreements with the budget numbers presented by the department which is being reviewed, and noted the value to having liaisons assigned to a particular department for more than one year. He warned that if the Town is facing a level services budget for FY22, there will be limited flexibility.

For the Warrant process, members expressed concern with comments or questions which are posed at Town Meeting, instead of at hearings during the Warrant Article process. Members discussed efforts to educate the public about Warrant Articles as soon as they become available, such as hosting the League of Women Voters Warrant Review earlier in February, and better publicizing the hearing dates for each Article. Other members wondered if most citizen questions and input is coming instead during Board of Selectmen ("BOS") hearings, instead of AdCom hearings.

Ms. Claypoole and Eric Haskell raised concerns about how to handle last-minute affirmative motions on citizens petitions, citing the last-minute affirmative motion proposal for the Tree By-law Article before 2020 Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Belyea expressed his opinion that in recent years, Community Preservation Committee leadership and project proponents did not provide the AdCom hearings with enough information on proposed CPC projects.

Regarding 2020 Annual Town Meeting, AdCom members agreed that the meeting went as well as could be expected, given the hot weather and distancing requirements.

Review and approval of interdepartmental, intradepartmental, and Reserve Fund Transfers for FY20

Sue Nickerson presented for AdCom approval the Reserve Fund Transfers for FY2020, plus the Inter-Department and Intra-Department Transfers, all of which have already been approved by the BOS. The total FY2020 appropriation for Reserve Fund Transfers was \$611,500. A Reserve Fund Request of \$6,396 was previously approved on 9/10/2019 for irrigation repairs to Lynch Field, which lowered the amount in the Reserve Fund account to \$605,104. The following Pending Reserve Fund transfers total \$596,300, which if approved, would leave \$8,804 remaining in the Reserve Fund account for use (if necessary) for the rest of FY2020.

1. Legal Department. Amount requested is \$509,125. The Town Administrator's office provided a spreadsheet with the breakdown of different categories of legal expenses provided for FY2020. Weir River Water Company and COVID-19 legal expenses will be reimbursed and go to Fund Balance early next year. Ms. Nickerson stated that examples of the legal expenses for COVID-19 could include advice on orders from the Governor, and statute research for the hosting of Town board meetings via Zoom. The Committee voted to approve the requested transfer 14-0 by roll call vote.

AdCom members agreed to review the rest of the transfer requests together, placing a hold on any request which needed further review or would not receive full support, and vote all the transfers together at the end.

2. South Shore Country Club. Amount requested is \$50,000. Due to the pandemic, the SSCC was closed and no revenue was coming in. The initial projected revenue loss was closer to \$200,000, but since reopening, the shortfall has decreased to \$50,000.
3. Town Meeting. Amount requested is \$20,000. Funds were needed to pay for an outdoor Town Meeting, due to COVID-19. Expenses will be reimbursed early next fiscal year by the Plymouth County share (\$90 million) of CARES Act funding from the federal government.
4. Information Technology Department. Amount requested is \$17,175. The amount requested is necessary because of a contract renewal, and overtime expenses related to COVID-19. The Town will seek reimbursement for the overtime expenses from Plymouth County. When asked whether the \$90 million is enough to cover all COVID-19 expenses across the County, Fire Chief Murphy replied that reimbursement money is being released in phases, the dollar amount per community is based on population plus other formulas, and he thinks that the CARES Act funding to Plymouth County will be enough to reimburse towns for their expenses.

The following Inter-Departmental Transfer requests, ask to transfer funds from one Town department to another. These kinds of transfers are allowed by the Commonwealth to offset any deficits within a department with a surplus from another department as long as the transfer amount is not over 3% of the budget aggregate.

1. Transfer \$58,320 to Property & Liability Insurance from Group Insurance. The insurance premium was increased due to substantial claims arising from the fire and flood at two schools.

2. Transfer \$50,000 to Unemployment from Group Insurance. These funds will cover the cost of unemployment through 6/30/2020. The Department of Unemployment has been overloaded with claims, and invoices from March-June have not been received.
3. Transfer \$19,000 to Town Meeting Expenses from Town Engineering Salaries, to pay for the indoor Town Meeting audiovisual system set up (in case of rain), plus additional expenses for outdoor Town Meeting tents.

The following are Interdepartmental Transfer requests, which would transfer funds from salaries to expenses, or vice versa, within the same department.

1. Fire Department. Transfer \$40,000 from Wages to Ambulance Supplies. Due to COVID-19, additional PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and other decontamination equipment needed to be ordered, and were not in the budget. All of these expenses should be reimbursed through the Plymouth County portion of the CARES Act or other reimbursement programs. Chief Murphy added that he applied for a FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) grant for reimbursement, and if this is not approved by FEMA, then he will submit the reimbursement request through the Plymouth County portion of the CARES Act. Since COVID-19 triggered a Federal Declaration of Emergency, Town departments have access to multiple options for reimbursement.

Chief Murphy added that when he starts budget preparation for the next fiscal year, he will probably use numbers from FY19. Because of the many unanticipated expenses in FY20, it would be better to incorporate numbers from FY19, because they may be more realistic.

2. Town Engineering. Transfer \$16,626 from Salaries to Expenses, for expenses incurred during the reorganization of the department, and

DEP reporting requirements for the Whitney Wharf remediation project (where contaminated soil was found).

3. Police Department. Transfer \$10,000 from Salaries to Expenses for the purchase of COVID-19 related items, such as signboard rentals and PPE. Chief Olsson will make a reimbursement request from the Plymouth County portion of the CARES Act. Available funds in Salaries were due to unfilled positions and new recruits with a lower starting salary.
4. Human Resources. Transfer \$7,835 from Salaries to Expenses for the construction of a Human Resources and Benefits office in Town Hall.
5. Animal Control. Transfer \$4,300 from Salaries to Expenses for the required update of equipment (a digital radio and laptop computer).
6. Town Accountant. Transfer \$2,865 from Expenses to Salaries to fund a salary step which was not accounted for in the budget

No holds for additional discussion were placed on any of the transfer requests. The Committee voted to approve the rest of the Reserve Fund Transfer requests (the Legal Department request having already been approved), all Inter-Departmental Transfer requests, and all Intra-Departmental Transfer requests by a roll call vote of 14-0.

Election of officers

Elections of officers for the new AdCom term were held. Mr. Belyea nominated Robert A. Curley, Jr., for the role of Chair. His election was approved by a roll call vote of 14-0.

Mr. Curley nominated Julie Strehle for the role of Vice Chair. Her election was approved by a roll call vote of 14-0.

Ms. Strehle nominated George Danis for the role of Secretary. His election was approved by a roll call vote of 14-0.

Authorization for incoming Chair to approve Reserve Fund and inter/intradepartmental transfers of \$10,000 or less for FY20 between 7/1/2020 and 7/15/2020

Ms. Nickerson explained that the Department of Revenue allows 15 days after the fiscal year-end for towns to close any deficits by the use of Reserve Fund transfers, Inter-Departmental, or Interdepartmental transfers. The customary procedure is for AdCom to vote the authorization for the incoming AdCom Chairman to sign off on any transfer requests of \$10,000 or less during this fifteen day period, in order to avoid having to convene an emergency AdCom meeting. Ms. Nickerson noted that while only \$8,800 is left in the Reserve Fund, there are plenty of budget surpluses for Inter- and Intra-Department transfers if needed. The vote to authorize incoming AdCom Chairman Bob Curley to sign off on these types of transfer requests was approved by a roll call vote of 14-0.

Liaison reports

Chair Baltera reported that graduate students from Harvard University are currently working on a long-term capital planning project for the Town. Students have interviewed Town employees and board members, such as Capital Outlay Committee Chairman Eric Valentine and AdCom Chairman Victor Baltera, and also conducted research on how other towns conduct long-term capital planning. At the end of the project, the students will present a report of their findings to the Town.

Discussion of Advisory Housekeeping Items

Ms. MacDonald was the winner of the wager on the end time of Town Meeting. She plans to put her prize money to use at a future in-person gathering of AdCom members.

Chairman Baltera recognized the three retiring AdCom members and thanked them for their efforts and hard work over the years. Retiring members are Tom Belyea, Eric Haskell, and Ed Gaydos.

Chairman Baltera also expressed his appreciation for all of the hard work that all members put into AdCom business over the past year, including their efforts to work cooperatively together.

Incoming Chairman Bob Curley reported that he expects the next AdCom meeting to be held in late August. The potential exists for a Special Town Meeting to be held in October to address the land purchase for a new public safety facility, so AdCom will need to prepare for this meeting. He also noted that at this early time of the AdCom calendar, the committee has extra leeway in its schedule to put something on the Agenda, so Mr. Curley is happy to hear suggestions for Agenda items.

Following the close of this evening's AdCom meeting, a social meeting will be held via Zoom to honor Chairman Baltera.

Matters Not Anticipated within 48 Hours of the Meeting - None

Adjourn - 8:44 pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Julie Strehle, Secretary

List of Documents Distributed for this Meeting:

Agenda

Draft Minutes of Meetings on 6/11/2020, 6/14/2020, and 6/20/2020
Reserve Fund Transfers FY20 (summary sheet plus all requests for Reserve Fund Transfers, Inter-Department Transfers, and Intra-Department Transfers)

Breakdown of Legal Expenses FY20 (by category)

Legal Expenses FY18 - FY20 (by category)

Approved 9/15/2020