

TOWN OF PRINCETON, MA
Princeton Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 13, 2019 – 6 p.m.

AC members in attendance: Wayne Adams, Mary Jo Wojtusik, Judy Dino, Helga Lyons

AC members absent: Rick McCowan, Bill Lawton

Also present: Sherry Patch, TA

Advisory Committee (AC) Agenda

- Discuss STM Warrant Article
- Approve Minutes
- Review Draft Town Financial Policy
- Review budget meeting schedule
- Updates by AC Committee/Board Liaisons

Meeting Minutes

Meeting started at 6:08 p.m

Discussion of STM Warrant Articles

Two warrant articles to be presented at STM will ask voters to move \$45,008.45 from the Environmental Clean-up account and \$113,576.42 from the Town Hall Annex Repair account to fund the total cost of \$247,600 for the stabilization of the current Public Safety Building to include an exhaust evacuation system at both the Public Safety Building and Fire Station II.

The funds in the Environmental Clean-up account had previously been moved to the Fire Station #2 Evacuation account as based on Article 10 of the May 9, 2017 ATM. These funds were not used and as such returned to the original account. It is noted, that the warrant article as presented asks voters to move funds from the Fire Station #2 Evacuation account. The article will be amended at the floor of the STM to reflect the proper account.

A third warrant article will ask voters to allow the remaining funds of \$4,956.79 in the Infrastructure/Accounting Software account (which were to be returned to the original source after 6/30/18) to remain in the account until June 30, 2020 to be available for further IT upgrades.

Total costs for the stabilization of the Public Safety Building were originally estimated at \$100,000 as based on the March 2018 JWA Report and respective funds in Article 10 of the May 2018 ATM were approved. Based on a bid price of \$247,600, which includes the costs for stabilization and evacuation equipment for both fire stations, the cost of stabilization has doubled from \$100,000 to \$200,000.

AC inquired as to why the costs doubled and received some general information to include the difficulty of getting a bid with a first RFP yielding no bids and a second RFP yielding one bid for \$247,600. The architects hired for the project, Dixon Salo Architects, Inc., expanded the project with various proposals to include a concrete floor for the police car parking garage and considerable work to be done on the truss supports. These items will not be pursued as they would increase total project costs considerably. Ultimately, the scope of work changed from the original proposals to extend the useful life of the building from 2-4 years to 4-8 years. In addition, prices have gone up from the prior year. The contract by the sole bidder P & P General Contractors does not provide sufficient detail to ascertain how the scope of work changed and as such, AC could not develop a full understanding of the doubling in price.

A Public Hearing convened at 7:13 p.m. There were two persons present from the public. No questions were brought forward. The public hearing was suspended at 7:15 p.m.

AC did not vote on the warrant articles as 1) additional information is needed to include the scope of work for the Public Safety Building and 2) we need a better understanding of the building strategy for the Public Safety Building, Annex and Town Hall as funding originally approved for the Annex is asked to be diverted to the Public Safety Building

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for 9/25/19 and 10/29/19 were approved as presented: 4Y/0N/0/A

Updates by AC Committee Board Liaisons

Parks & Recreation.: Judy Dino reported that residents in East Princeton are very much interested in having a new playground at Sawyer Field. Sherry Patch mentioned that Park grants are available. It was suggested to conduct fundraising. The project should be managed by the Parks & Recreation Committee. It was noted that Parks & Recreation has been very focused on Krashes Field, which continues to be an issue as expenses exceed income. A business plan should be developed. A citizen survey yielded minimum response. AC members (Judy & Wayne) will meet with the director next week to discuss above items.

Building & Maintenance: A new committee was formed with four members (currently). They are in the process of conducting site visits and a survey of buildings. Sherry Patch is participating. Mary Jo will be the liaison.

Regional Schools: Wayne attended the Wachusett Regional School District FY21 Budget Roundtable on November 7, 2019. Budget drivers for FY21: Elementary School Counselors, Implementation of Fountas Pinnell in Grade 3, Continuation of 1:1 Chromebook at WRSB, Re-surfacing of track at high school, Reduction of Class Sizes, Facilities (Operations and Maintenance), and Employee Benefits.

The School Administration asked the towns for general guidance on the level of budget increase they could absorb. The Town of Holden will be sending a letter to the five towns looking for a vote of approval.

The ongoing message from Princeton has been that the town has been abused by the chapter 70 formula, having paid up to 99.5% of MLC. It still pays 82.5% of MLC, while other towns in the district pay

much less. It was communicated that Princeton is small and going forward the town will be less flexible due to other town priorities (i.e. several building projects).

Holden has less financial flexibility as it is in the process of building a new DPW building and an additional elementary school is under consideration, but is amenable to a 3.5% increase due to a higher student population. Sterling is OK with a 2-3% increase. Rutland, Paxton and Princeton made no comment on percentage increases.

The towns would like to see more transparency on the revolving funds, a 5-year capital plan to include a 10-year capital plan for buildings, a strategy for paying OPEB obligations and more line-item transparency for salaries, which represent ~80% of the district budget.

Legislator Harriett Chandler communicated some possible improvements in funding for education given the current budget surplus to include more circuit breaker funds (for special ed transportation costs). Chapter 70 MLC is under review for recommendations due Dec 2020 and a rural school review commission is reviewing 100% funding for transportation. (Note: when WRSD was formed, the state promised 100% funding for transportation, but actual funding has never been more than 70% of cost, plus the district only gets funds for students living more than 1.5 Miles from a school, although we do not have sidewalks for kids to walk). The recent Student Opportunity Act (SOA) stipulates no district/region will receive less funds than the previous year. This is helpful for districts with declining student populations. WRSD overall is slightly declining with the exception of Holden.

EAC:. Helga attended the November 7, 2019 Planning Board meeting, where EAC made a presentation on the bylaw requirements to achieve Green Community status. Princeton would have to provide zoning in designated locations for the as-of-right siting for either 1) renewable or alternative energy generating facilities, or 2) renewable or alternative energy research and development (R & D) facilities or 3) renewable or alternative energy manufacturing facilities. As-of-right siting means that the development may proceed without the need for a special permit, variance, amendment, or other discretionary approval. It may be subject to non-discretionary site plan review to determine conformance with local zoning bylaws as well as state and federal law.

The Planning Board deemed alternative 1) renewable or alternative energy generating facilities as the most feasible for the Town of Princeton. The former town landfill was discussed as a possible as-of-right site. It was suggested that EA do some additional research regarding this possibility: 1) follow up with PMLD as to the feasibility of a solar project at the site, 2) clarify access to the site via the existing easement; 3) does the existing power distribution structure allow for the connection of a PV facility; 4) does the Conservation Commission have any concerns regarding abutting sites.

The Vice Chair of EA volunteered to draft respective by-law as items above are clarified. The other by-law needed to meet the criteria for becoming a Green Community is the adoption of the Massachusetts Board of Building Regulations and Standards Stretch Code. The Planning Commission did not see an issue with this requirement as the Stretch Code has become standard practice in Massachusetts.

The review of the Draft Town Financial Policy and budget meeting schedule were postponed to a future meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Upcoming AC meetings:

11/21 – 6:15 p.m. AC Meeting prior to STM

The following meetings will be joint with SB:

12/3 - 6pm - RAC/DPW

12/5 - 6pm - police

12/9 - 7pm - fire

12/11 - 7pm - buildings, library

12/12 - 6pm - general government, parks & recreation

Handouts: Minutes of 9/25/19 and 10/29/19 meeting; draft contract from P & P

Minutes recorded by Helga Lyons, Secretary