

Town of Princeton, Mass. – April 10, 2017 – 5 PM

Board of Selectmen – Budget Meeting Minutes

Chairman Stan Moss, Edith Morgan, and Jon Fudeman plus TA Nina Nazarian.

5:05 PM Stan opened BOS meeting in the Town Hall Annex. Advisory Committee members all present: John Shipman, Jim O'Coin, Wayne Adams, Judy Dino. George Handy, Don Schoeny and Bill Lawton.

On a citizen's petition to create an Environmental Action Committee, organizer Claire Goulding, with several supportive citizens, was in to explain details. The committee would craft an Environmental Action Plan with several goals: investigate becoming a Green Community which opens eligibility for grants to support energy-saving initiatives such as new HVAC systems, boilers etc.; meet Master Plan goals for energy-saving and environmental protection. The state's Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs recommends this. They discussed grants provided by MassSave which is funded by National Grid.

Stan advised against wording in the petition that implied any regulation over existing boards and committees which already deal with these issues. Nina warned that the article may be non-binding, the way it's worded. She also pointed out that there are pros and cons attached to Green Community status.

Claire insisted that the new committee would be strictly advisory, that it could investigate grants and do the footwork for projects that staff has no time for. She anticipated the committee forming later in 2017. John S. invited her to the Advisory Cmte. public hearing for the warrant on April 24.

5:20 PM Group discussed use of the \$20,000 grant for a building needs plan, and how it may or may not merge with the \$100,000 Capital Improvement Plan funding. Nina noted the ways that they are different, and George H. pointed out that it looks like two different studies looking at two independent things. Jon asked about merging the grants, more efficiently using a single vendor, and Nina will see if that's possible and if so, remove the additional \$2,000 budget request for establishing a policy, outlined for FY18.

Judy D. said the extra funds could expand the building needs study to include buildings beyond the town hall campus. Group discussed the Town of Barre model which compares closely with Princeton's needs. Barre enlisted a professional Capital Needs Study with several million in grant funds.

5:47 PM Turning to the warrant articles, Nina explained minor changes, in the phone bills on the Expense Sheet along with changes in the T.A.'s compensation. The group discussed increasing the contingency on construction estimates, as contractor's cost figures are coming in higher than consulting engineers' are.

Nina reviewed minor changes in several other articles, such as inserting a sunset date for unspent funds in revolving accounts, to be returned to general fund and then spent under direction of BOS.

6:05 PM Actuarial presentation by Mr. Parker Elmore of consulting firm Odyssey –on Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) began with distribution of booklet designed specifically for Princeton. He explained that the self-study software the town used to figure out its OPEB contribution was not really accurate and hard numbers from a thorough study would not likely be as generous. Essentially, Princeton is in the top 4 percent of Mass. communities which are 20 percent funded toward their OPEB liability, although the school district's liability is not included in that percentage, otherwise the Town's position may not appear as favorable. By contrast, 74

percent are funded less than one percent which includes 37 percent that are not funded at all. Jon F. pointed out that, if the town can spend it later, why spend it (on OPEB) in current years. Parker agreed that towns have to prioritize their spending, and if current capital needs pre-empt contribution to OPEB, it's the town's decision. He explained ways to manage liabilities, noting how other communities invest into the OPEB irrevocable trust, adding that small town cannot assume much of the risk of equities, and should stick with conservative issues like Treasury Bills or some mutual funds. He explained how the irrevocable trust works, and it can provide certain payouts over time; it's not "locked up."

Parker recommended an annual contribution of about \$84,000 but asked how soon the town wanted to retire this debt. Selectmen must consider the burden on current and future taxpayers. He said Princeton is in a good position and regulators want to see good faith—that you're doing something. He advised against tapping into the fund as it reflects poorly on the town's financial status.

7:15 PM Parker finished and everyone thanked him for providing info and explaining it to everyone's satisfaction. Nina explained the rest of the minor changes in the warrant. One change addressed a Septic System Stabilization Fund for T.P. School using \$2,000/year from WRSD. Stan noted the current system was constructed to accept 14 gal./person/day but an actual meter reading revealed the usage at 5 gal./person/day, so a system upgrade/repair should not be needed anytime soon.

7:40 PM Advisory Cmte. adjourned. Nina recommended that Rev. Linda Michel be appointed Memorial Day officer and the committee be eliminated. Also, change the Personnel Board from five members to three. Selectmen voted all in favor to approve her recommendations as stated. Stan then presented a "replacement contract" for the T.A., in effect through June 30, 2021, with upgrade in retirement benefit from \$1,400 to \$3,000 in FY18 plus increase T.A. Expense Account to \$5,000 in FY19, to pay for professional training. Selectmen voted all in favor to approve the contract as presented and signed four copies, as town counsel gets one.

7:50 PM Board considered new lease agreement from WRSD, which was signed by all town except Sterling. Board voted all in favor to authorize the T.A. to sign WRSD Lease and for each member to sign Maintenance Agreement.

7:52 PM 8:40 PM Stan moved and Jon seconded to go into executive session, and not return to regular session: in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, §21: A. Exemption Three – To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares – Police Union. In roll call Edith voted "Aye," Jon voted "Aye" and Stan voted "Aye."

SEE SEPARATE MINUTES

7:57 PM Selectmen adjourned from executive session

Respectfully submitted, Marie Auger, admin.assist.

BOS Referenced Documents: Town budget materials and warrant for 2017 ATM; citizen's petition from Claire Goulding; Odyssey booklet "Presentation of GASB45 Results"; WRSD Lease and Maintenance Agreements; New TA contract; Capital Improvements Plan proposal.

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