

Town of Harvard
Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes May 2nd, 2018

Members present: Don Ludwig (chair), Peter du Bois, Charles Oliver, Jennifer Finch, Steve Colwell, John Seeley, Richard Fellows

Not present: Bruce Nickerson, Mark Buell

Others: Tim Bragan - Town Administrator, Marie Sobalvarro Asst. Town Administrator/HR Director, David Nalchajian – Town Finance Director

Location: Town Hall Meeting Room - 2nd floor - 13 Ayer Rd, Harvard, MA

Don Ludwig (chair) called the meeting to order at 7:02pm

Public Commentary:

Bill Marinelli of Stow Road explained that his experience as a financial manager motivated him to question the SBC decision recommending the new HES building. He also asserted that SBC did not perform due diligence prior to making the recommendation. He urged the board revisit the March 8th vote with the full board present.

Ken Swanton of 14 Fairbanks St., presented his views on the SBC process. Swanton asserted that the SBC did not spend adequate time considering less costly renovation options. Swanton also recommended the board revisit the March 8th vote with full board present.

Ron Ricci of East Bare Hill Road also recommended the board revisit their vote on the new HES building and that FinCom attempt to do so prior to the ATM. Ludwig stated he had no objection to doing so, if the full board was in attendance.

Mary Traphagen of Still River Road, School Committee Chair and School Building Committee member. Traphagen noted that the MSBA has a prescribed and rigorous process that must be followed without deviation, in order to be considered for a grant. She also reminded FinCom that all SBC members are town residents and will be impacted by the tax increase from the new HES building. She noted further that the prevailing view of the SBC at the start of the process, was that a renovation was the most likely path forward. In addition Traphagen noted that SBC's review process considered other alternatives to a new building. Also noted was that a delay resulting from no votes at ATM and at the ballot would increase costs above the estimates the town now has.

Shannon Molloy of Stow Road, stated that while disruptions during the building process are of concern to parents, they have greater concerns regarding the health and safety of children and staff members as a result of being exposed to a unhealthy environment.

Minutes: Minutes from March 8th 2018 were approved as amended; Minutes from March 14th were approved as amended; Minutes from April 4th were approved as amended.

Other business: Tim Bragan presented a summary of the town's warrant article for the board's review, with changes as noted below:

Warrant article #2: FinCom had not acted on this article previously. Bragan requested that FinCom make a motion to approve or disapprove the article. Motion by Oliver/Fellows to approve was passed unanimously.

Warrant article #3: Sunset date - no changes

Warrant article #4: Funds in the amount of \$79,289 were withdrawn from stabilization fund to cover this article, however this will not impact the 5% requirement for the Stabilization Fund so no money will be required to go back in.

Warrant article #5: The amount of \$25,982,510.00 is a combination of amounts as detailed in warrant article #5.

Warrant article #6 - #11: No changes

Warrant article #12: Conservation Fund was funded at \$10K by SB on a 5/0 vote, a reduction from \$35K from last Conservation Commission request. FinCom previously recommended funding at \$5K. FinCom members briefly discussed the amount and reaffirmed their decision that funding should remain at \$5K.

Warrant article #13 – 24: No changes

Warrant article #25: Amount in corrective post card is not the same as the summary presented here. Reason: Amount in summary sheet presented is the final amount from the Superintendent of Schools

Warrant article #26 – 31: No changes

Warrant article #32: Supported by SB (Bragan did state vote details)

Warrant article #33: SB voted 4/1 in favor of amending

Warrant article #34: Article has been removed

Warrant article #35: Planning Board has decided not to go forward as there were concerns regarding how inclusive or exclusive it was, as well as concerns that the restrictions on it were too great.

Warrant article #36: Bragan stated that Mr. Green has his motion ready for this

Warrant article #37 – 39: No change

Warrant article #40: SB voted in favor by a 3/2 vote

Warrant article #41: Approved by the SB on a 5/0 vote

Warrant article #42: Bragan stated the full \$62k will be needed to fund

Warrant article #43: No gifts have been received by the town.

Warrant article #44: Bragan stated that the town has not received the chapter 90 letter yet, however, even without the letter, the article has been written such that we can accept the funds when they arrive, providing the article passes.

Bragan complimented the Assistant Town Administrator for the clarity of the summary sheet.

Town Administrator's report: Update to town administrator report: Bragan stated that the State House has approved a budget for us that is \$15k more than the Governor's.

Question from Oliver: What was the agreed upon increase in revenue? Bragan was unsure on the amount, but expects to have the amount by ATM. Final budget amount will depend on the Senate, which will complete its budget by the end of May. The Senate is likely to split diff between Governor's and House's recommendation, thus the \$15k may be reduced or eliminated.

Bragan summarized the logistics for town meeting. Far larger attendance than usual is expected, therefore the gym will be open to voters only, and all spectators will be in the auditorium. Parents may place their kids in daycare or take them to the auditorium. If the gym does not fill to capacity, then all will be moved to the gym. There was additional discussion regarding limits on the discussion time and presentation of article #25, balloting procedure, check-in time. Ballots will be counted on the premises, counters will be cordoned off while counting takes place. There are 14 - 16 ballot counters. Once all ballots have been counted people are free to leave the gym.

Finance Director's report: Nalchajian stated the Fed has remained neutral this month, from the perspective of economists, with two rate increases remaining likely for the remainder of this year. However, we are still in a rising rate environment which increases the risk that bond rates will rise in the future.

Liaison Reports: None

Motion to adjourn by Don Ludwig (chair), seconded, and approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:23 pm

Upcoming meetings:

Saturday May 5th at @ 8:30 at the Bromfield Gymnasium.

Documents referenced: Minutes from March 8th, March 14th and April 4 2018; Summary of Town Warrant Articles.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter du Bois
Associate member, FinCom