

Finance Board Meeting Minutes: March 6th , 2015

Attendees: *George McCormack, Julie Desimone, Russ Wilson, Stephen Dapkiewicz, Hilde Maccormack, Patty Walsh, Rachel Meredith-Warren, Devon Manchester*

Chairman Dapkiewicz called the meeting to order at 7:30PM and presented the board and the audience with the agenda. First up was the appointment of the Water and Sewer Review Board. Chairman Dapkiewicz said that upon request of one of the members in the audience that each board member go around the room and state their name. After this was completed Chairman Dapkiewicz asked that Therese Diblasi come forward to give a brief opening remark and field questions. Ms. Diblasi said she had been a member of the Water and Sewer Review Board for 15 years and has a background in state agency economic development. She informed the board that she has a great relationship with the Town Administrator and the Director of the DPW.

Mr. Wilson asked Ms. Diblasi about the DPW articles specifically regarding the water and sewer amounts listed for the May Town Meeting. Ms. Diblasi could not speak specifically to those articles. Ms. Meridith Warren asked what the role of the Water and Sewer Review Board was and Ms Diblasi answered that it was to hear disputes and work with the Town Accountant, Town Administrator, and Director of the DPW in setting rates. Ms. Walsh asked if all meetings were public and if minutes were kept, Ms. Diblasi answered that they were but that no one shows up. Mr. McCormack asked how long Ms. Diblasi had been chair and she replied 4 years but that it was probably more than that. Mr. McCormack asked if she had been chair for such an extended period because no one wanted the position and she replied that it was because she was doing a good job and capable additionally the Water and Sewer Review Board members wanted her in that position.

Next, Chairman Dapkiewicz asked Scott Lebeau the other candidate to come to the table to give a brief opening remark and answer questions. Mr. Lebeau explained he is currently a non voting member of the Water and Sewer Review Board and wishes to become a voting member. Mr. Lebeau said he has relative experience because he maintains and operates a water chilling facility and he is very informed with what is going on with the Town. He attends most BOS meetings and many other meetings and that will give him insight into asking the right questions. He claimed to work to provide more transparency highlighting several instances where the current Water and Sewer Review Board didn't post an accurate agenda and didn't meet since May of 2014. Mr. Wilson asked Mr. Lebeau what he thought of the Water and Sewer articles slated for the May 2015 Town Meeting and said that most were standard. Mr. Wilson said that the DPW was asking for \$800K in bonding and that was much more than usual. Mr. Lebeau countered that he believes it was that the MWRA was giving the Town an interest free loan and the town wanted to get the most out of the 0% rate offering.

After Mr. Lebeau finished Mr. Mangerian requested to speak on behalf of Ms. Diblasi. He informed the Board that he was a former selectman and saw the Water and Sewer Review Board as an important watchdog. Mr. Mangerian said Ms. Diblasi was a valuable member and she has done a great job.

Mr. Manchester stated that there is benefit to a fresh set of ideas. Ms. Meredith-Warren asked if Ms. Diblasi had a succession plan and what would be the ideal number of years served. Ms. Diblasi answered that a person should be able to serve indefinitely [if appointed].

A roll call vote was taken with 6 votes in favor of Mr. Lebeau and 2 abstentions coming from Hilde Maccormack and Julie Desimone.

The board moved to allow a representative, John O'Rourke from Good Energy to speak about Article 16. Article 16 is to see if the Town will vote to grant the BOS authority to develop a contract to aggregate the electricity load of the town. One of the companies the BOS may wish to contract is Good Energy and independent consultant that works to bring down electricity rates. Electricity rates have more than doubled in the past year and Mr. Wilson made note of this. Mr. O'Rourke explained that electricity costs are very much in unison with gas prices and Eversource purchased a delivery of oil in last years "polar vortex" causing electricity prices to be high this year. Mr. McCormack said that Eversource must have analysts trying to make predictions on the best time to buy oil and take a deliverable. Mr. O'Rourke said that is what Good Energy does and Eversource takes the delivery on the same day(s) every year. Mr. Wilson asked to see what the town could have saved if they had been using Good Energy, however, Mr. O'Rourke said that it takes 11 months to get the process 'online' and there may not be a perfect comparable. Melrose has contracted with Good Energy but they are not yet 'online.' Mr. McCormack said any number would need to be taken lightly since it's obvious in hindsight what date someone would have bought energy futures. Mr. Wilson said that something was better than nothing and asked Mr. O'Rourke what the average savings was and he answered between \$80 and \$150 per household per year. Ms. Maccormack asked if there was a penalty fee to opt out of current service agreement and Mr. O'Rourke stated that some have them and others don't and it's important for citizens to check. Mr. McCormack asked if there was a penalty to opt of Good Energy's plan and he stated there was not in the state of Massachusetts.

Mr. McCormack made a motion to recommend favorable action on Article 16, it was seconded by Ms. Meredith-Warren and passed unanimously.

Chairman Dapkiewicz introduced a new member to the board, Hilde Maccormack.

Mr. Dapkiewicz said he received the email from Mr. McCormack on Article 15 for the purchase of new Fire Engines. The email written by Mr. McCormack was in response to the boards misunderstanding of the article and Mr. McCormack's discussion with Chief Rolli. Mr. Dapkeiwicz said that he attended the Capital Committee where they voted to pass the article and there was much agreement that it was poorly worded. Mr. Wilson said Mr. McCormack's email cleared up the issue for him. Given this no vote was taken.

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday April 13th.

Mr. Manchester made a motion to adjourn and it was seconded and unanimous. The meeting concluded at 9:34 PM

Respectfully,

George McCormack