

Stoneham Finance and Advisory Board
Monday, September 25, 2017—7:30pm
Stoneham Town Hall Hearing Room

ATTENDEES:

Angelo Mangino, *Chair*
Susan Lippman, *Vice-Chair*
Thomas Dalton, *Secretary*

Ben Caggiano Stephanie Hayes
Julianne DeSimone Domenic Martignetti
George Drugas Tim Waitkevitch
Robert Fitzsimmons

GUESTS:

Jeanne Craigie, *Town Moderator*
Heidi Bilbo, *New Appointee to the Finance and Advisory Board*

MINUTES:

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. Ms. Craigie introduced Heidi Bilbo, the newest appointed member of the Finance and Advisory Board. Ms. Bilbo could not be sworn in before the meeting, but planned to take her oath on September 26, 2017. She introduced herself to the Board, expressed her excitement at the opportunity to serve the Town, and remained as a guest for the remainder of the meeting.

The Chair directed the Board to consider the first agenda item: the discussion of the October Town Meeting warrant and the Board's recommendations on each article. The Board began with Article 1, regarding a proposed amendment to the Town's zoning bylaw for the non-public use of public land. The Article would amend the bylaw to permit the use of open space and recreation land for non-public use by the other regulations and restrictions of the bylaw. The Chair expressed his understanding that the article is intended to address the use of all Town land for construction lay-downs and other temporary non-public use. Mr. Dalton stated his view that a Finance and Advisory Board recommendation on this article may be unnecessary, as the bylaw amendment would have no direct financial bearing on the Town. The Chair added that it would be premature to act on this article, because a public meeting will be held to explain it on October 4, and added that he does not favor any bylaw amendments that would take power away from Town Meeting. Mr. Dalton disagreed that this article would change the powers of Town Meeting, elaborating that Town Meeting never had direct administration over public lands, and that this bylaw amendment would not change Town Meeting's authority or affect its powers in any way. The Vice-Chair agreed that the article has no direct financial bearing and that there is no need for the Finance and Advisory Board to recommend action. Mr. Drugas agreed, but also acknowledged that the proposed amendment could benefit the Town in contract negotiations by affording Town authorities more flexibility and bargaining power. Mr. Dalton moved that the Board make no recommendation on Article 1, Mr. Martignetti seconded the motion, and the members assented unanimously.

The Chair directed the members to consider Article 2, regarding a zoning change at 577 Main Street. The property in question, the Chair explained, is a former doctor's office, and a developer hopes to build 4 residential townhouses on the property. The Vice-Chair added that it is her understanding that if the zoning change is not made, the property will only be suitable for the development of 3 townhouses. Mr. Fitzsimmons moved that the Board recommend favorable action on Article 2, Mr. Drugas seconded the motion, and the members assented unanimously.

The Chair opened discussion of Article 3, regarding the appropriation of \$25,000 for Town Hall parking lot maintenance and improvement. Mr. Waitkevitch reported that the Capital Committee determined that the proposed improvements would be made in conjunction with improvements made after the completion of Eversource road work on Central Street, adding 16 to 19 new parking spots in the Town Hall lot, exceeding the statutory requirements for handicapped parking, and improving both pavement quality and public safety. The members of the Capital Committee unanimously recommended favorable action on Article 3. The Vice-Chair moved that the Board recommend favorable action on Article 3, Mr. Dalton seconded the motion, and the members assented unanimously.

The Chair invited the members to review Article 4, regarding the appropriation of \$25,000 for the purpose of funding the Commercial Improvement Program. The Chair explained that the CIP provides funding to match \$1 for every \$3 that downtown businesses invest in improving their storefronts. So far, the Chair explained, the program has produced \$82,000 in investments in the downtown, with the Town investing a total of about \$24,000. Mr. Dalton moved that the Board recommend favorable action on Article 4, Mr. Martignetti seconded the motion, and the members assented unanimously.

The Chair reviewed Article 5, regarding the appropriation of \$25,000 to fund the Town's Island Beautification program. The Vice-Chair moved that the Board recommend favorable action on Article 5, Mr. Fitzsimmons seconded the motion, and the members assented unanimously.

The Chair addressed Article 6, which calls for the appropriation of \$25,000 to fund a government wage and classification study. The Vice-Chair asked whether this article indicates that there is concern that the Town's wages are not competitively scaled. Further, Mr. Caggiano asked why the expense to fund the study. Mr. Dalton recommended that the members seek clarification from the Town Administrator and the Board assented generally, so the article was informally tabled until the Administrator furnishes more information.

The Chair raised discussion of Article 7, regarding the appropriation of \$50,000 for the purpose of conducting a pavement management study. The Chair surmised that the study is intended to address and formulate road repair priorities. Mr. Caggiano questioned whether the study is necessary, adding his understanding that the Department of Public Works is responsible for the assessment of road repair priorities. Mr. Dalton surmised that specialized engineering expertise might be necessary for the Town's specific intent, and the Vice-Chair said that regardless, the Town Administrator should clarify the article's intent. The Board agreed again, and the article was informally tabled until the Administrator furnishes more information.

The members next addressed Article 8, regarding the appropriation of funds to pay outstanding bills from prior fiscal years. The Chair informed the members that the bills amount to a total of approximately \$2,000, and are largely bills from the month of July. Mr. Dalton moved that the Board recommend favorable action on Article 8, Ms. Hayes seconded the motion, and the members assented unanimously.

The Chair directed the members to review Article 9, regarding mandatory snow removal on Main Street sidewalks. The Chair acknowledged that the article has no direct financial bearing on the Town, and would constitute a statutory change for property owners. Mr. Dalton moved that the Board make no recommendation on Article 9, the Vice-Chair seconded the motion, and the members assented unanimously.

The Chair opened discussion regarding Article 10, which would adjust the standard speed limit in thickly-settled districts to 25 miles per hour. The Chair expressed his view that the change is ill-advised, as the Town is already largely unable to enforce existing speed limits; further, he feels that the Town would do better to add more solar-powered radar signs, which have shown some success in reducing speeding elsewhere in Town, including on Washington Street. Mr. Waitkevitch suggested that there is likely no need for the Board to recommend favorable or unfavorable action, as a change to speed limits would not have direct financial impact on the Town beyond the modest costs of updating speed limit signage. Personally, Mr. Waitkevitch echoed the sentiment that speeding in Town is a problem, but suggested some skepticism that simply lowering speed limits will solve the problem of speeding. Mr. Dalton expressed a personal desire to see more data, stating that if lowering speed limits stands to improve public safety, speed limits should be lowered; Mr. Waitkevitch agreed. The Chair suggested that the Board make no recommendation on Article 10, Mr. Dalton made the motion to that effect, the motion was seconded and the members assented unanimously.

The Chair opened discussion on Article 11, which would authorize the Town to revoke or suspend any local licenses or permits as a penalty for failure to pay any local taxes, fees, assessments, betterments or any other municipal charges. The Vice-Chair expressed her surprise that this power was not already reserved by the Town and expressed her support for the article, moving that the Board recommend favorable action. Mr. Drugas seconded the motion and the members assented unanimously.

The Board discussed Article 12, regarding additional annual compensation of \$1,000 to the Town Clerk once the clerk has been certified as a Massachusetts municipal clerk by the Massachusetts Town Clerks' Association. Mr. Dalton expressed support, noting that competitive compensation is essential to the retention by the Town of expert employees. Mr. Fitzsimmons moved that the Board recommend favorable action on Article 12, the motion was seconded and the members assented unanimously.

The Chair invited the members to review Article 13, regarding the appropriation of \$60,000 for the purchase of a utility truck for the Department of Public Works. Mr. Waitkevitch explained that this request was presented to the Capital Committee, as the vehicle which needs to be replaced has failed state inspection, and the cost of repairs exceeds the vehicle's total value. Mr. Waitkevitch explained that although the Capital Committee aims to follow a vehicle

replacement plan, this is an emergency purchase which is necessary for winter DPW operations, especially snow removal. Ms. DeSimone inquired whether this replacement will “bump” another vehicle back in the vehicle replacement cycle, and Mr. Waitkevitch responded that this cost will, unfortunately, be additional, rather than a substitution. Still, he added, the replacement of this vehicle now will likely free later funding for vehicle replacement, and Mr. Waitkevitch intended to check with the Capital Committee for additional information. Mr. Dalton moved that the Board recommend favorable action on Article 13, Mr. Drugas seconded the motion, and the members assented unanimously.

The Chair addressed Article 14, regarding the appropriation of \$40,000 for the purpose of purchasing two DPW utility vehicles. The Chair explained that the DPW anticipated “hand-me-downs” from the Police Department to fill this need, but that none of the retired police vehicles fit the DPW’s need for all-wheel drive utility vehicles. Mr. Waitkevitch added that although the Capital Committee recommended favorable action on this article, the vote was split, with two votes of dissent, as some members were perturbed that normal vehicle replacement planning and priorities were not observed with this request. The Chair suggested the possibility that the Town lease vehicles to fill this need or that DPW employees be asked to use personal vehicles. Mr. Waitkevitch responded to the former suggestion, stating that wear and tear on the vehicles is likely too great for leasing to be viable. Ms. DeSimone said that it may be best to wait to fund this need, remarking that by saying “no” to non-urgent matters, the Town has more flexibility to address emergency matters. The Vice-Chair remarked that although the Capital Committee’s split opinion suggests that this is a marginal issue, it’s also important to prevent hardship for the DPW during the busy winter months. Mr. Drugas suggested that the Board should seek additional information from the Town Administrator, and the members informally agreed to defer action until the Town Administrator was given the opportunity to address members’ concerns.

The Chair opened discussion regarding Article 15, regarding the appropriation of \$110,000 to fund the purchase of two police cruisers for the Police Department. Mr. Waitkevitch explained that this appropriation is a part of the planned replacement cycle, and that the last time cruisers were replaced was 2014. The replacement calls for the purchase of two or three police vehicles per year, which is a conservative plan relative to Massachusetts State Police recommendations for police vehicle replacement. Mr. Fitzsimmons moved that the Board recommend favorable action on Article 15, Ms. Hayes seconded the motion, and the members assented unanimously.

The members agreed to defer discussion of Article 16, regarding Stoneham Arena repair funding, until after Mr. Fitzsimmons made his report from the Arena Sub-Committee.

The Chair invited the members to review Article 17, which would appropriate \$24,000 to continue the repair of hazardous and unstable gravestones as identified in the Old Burying Ground Preservation Plan of June 2012. The Chair remarked that preserving the Town’s history is an important endeavor. Mr. Waitkevitch added that \$24,000 will fund a good deal of the total Preservation Plan costs over the next several years, and that the preservation and maintenance of memorial sites is an important act of respect. The Vice-Chair remarked that maintaining safety and eliminating hazards on public land is also an important undertaking, and moved that the

Board recommend favorable action on Article 17. Mr. Martignetti seconded the motion and the members assented unanimously.

The Chair opened discussion on Article 18, regarding authorizing the Board of Selectmen to sell a parcel of land between Elmhurst Street and Tremont Street. The Chair remarked favorably on the article, saying that the parcel is too small to be of major consequence and that it is good practice to return unneeded public lands to the tax rolls. Ms. DeSimone moved that the Board recommend favorable action on Article 18, Ms. Hayes seconded the motion and the members assented unanimously.

The Chair invited the members to review Article 19, regarding the amendment of the Stoneham Alarm Bylaw to afford the Fire Chief the option to appoint a fire detail during road work on public ways. The Chair posited that this amendment has been proposed to help the Town address the large-scale roadwork and utility projects throughout the Town. Ms. Hayes added that the bylaw change would not require a fire detail, but simply empower the Fire Chief to appoint one as he deems necessary. Mr. Drugas moved that the Board recommend favorable action on Article 19, Ms. Hayes seconded the motion, and the members assented unanimously.

The Chair addressed Article 20, but only to remark that the article is pending a language update, and to recommend that the Board postpone action on the article until final language is received.

The Chair next invited Mr. Fitzsimmons to make his report as a member of the Stoneham Arena Sub-Committee. Mr. Fitzsimmons reported that the sub-committee met on September 18, constituted of the Town Accountant, the Arena manager, and representatives from the Finance and Advisory Board, the Open Space and Recreation Committee, and the Capital Committee. He addressed Warrant Article 16, which calls for the borrowing of \$1.6 million to repair and maintain the Stoneham Arena. The Arena manager, the Town government, and the Arena Sub-Committee agree that repairs to the Arena are crucial for its continued operation. The Arena has already taken steps to maintain financial viability by increasing ice rental rates by an average of \$30 per hour and requiring a 10% security deposit for booked ice time. Regarding debt, the Town Accountant suggested that the first 10 years of the 20-year debt service will be borne largely by Stoneham's general fund, but that the next 10 years will be funded from Arena revenues.

Mr. Fitzsimmons also outlined the following problems and challenges at the Arena, and the proposed solutions:

- Employee retention is poor due to low wages. The Arena manager hopes to extend the hours of the Arena, increasing revenues, and use the revenues to hire an Assistant Manager.
- Money-handling remains haphazard and difficult to track. The Town Accountant is planning training for best practices regarding cash. The Arena is working with checks rather than cash for pre-booked ice time.
- Energy costs are high; the Arena uses a great deal of electricity. Repairs to the compressor system will increase energy efficiency, and the continued installation of LED lighting will afford the Arena access to green energy rebates.

The Chair thanked Mr. Fitzsimmons for serving as the Board's representative on the Sub-Committee. He expressed his cautious optimism that improvements will come to the Arena with the needed repairs, and emphasized that the Board should continue to serve as a watchdog over administrative and financial problems at the Arena. The Vice-Chair cautioned that the Town must remain vigilant to avoid starving the Arena by insufficiently supporting its administration and maintenance. Ms. DeSimone asked whether the Board should recommend an amendment to Article 16 to stipulate Arena adherence to administrative practices set by Town Meeting, but the Board discussed the challenges and pitfalls of on-the-floor amendments at Town Meeting. Mr. Waitkevitch suggested that, when the Board makes its recommendation to Town Meeting, a member can also address the persistent concerns. The members assented generally. Mr. Dalton moved that the Board recommend favorable action on Article 16, the Vice-Chair seconded the motion, and the members assented unanimously.

The Chair invited the Board to review the September 11 meeting minutes. Ms. DeSimone made one correction regarding the source of a projection for Arena revenues, and Mr. Dalton agreed to make the correction. The Vice-Chair requested that future meeting agendas address the acceptance of past meeting minutes first, in keeping with Robert's Rules of Order, and the members assented generally. Mr. Fitzsimmons moved that the Board accept the meeting minutes, the Vice-Chair seconded the motion, and the members assented unanimously.

The Board moved to miscellaneous issues. He gave an update regarding the Police Station's Uninterruptible Power Source (UPS); the Board had previously authorized the use of \$40,000 of its discretionary fund to pay for a replacement UPS after the old system failed. The replacement UPS will actually cost \$42,000, leaving only \$8,000 in the discretionary fund.

The Vice-Chair moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Dalton seconded the motion, and the members assented unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Dalton
Secretary