

Stoneham Finance & Advisory Board Meeting
Monday March 18, 2019 - 7:00pm
Stoneham Town Hall Hearing Room

Attendees:

Tim Waitkevitch, Chair
Heidi Bilbo, Vice Chair
Andrew Harmon, Secretary

Devin Desmarais	Jeremy Doyle
Ed Hurley	Susan Lippman
Cory Mashburn	Wendy Smith
Chris Waszak	

Absent: Domenic Martignetti

Guests:

None

Agenda:

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Minutes from 2/20, 3/4
3. 3/12 Tri-Board and Capital Recap
4. Fiscal Guideline Subcommittee Update
5. FY20 Goal - Establish FAB Resource Center Update
6. FAB Dept Budget Feedback
7. FY20 Goal - Financial Data Presentation and Metrics
8. Other Business - Non Deliberative

Minutes:

Finance & Advisory Board Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Mr. Waitkevitch opened the meeting with Agenda Item #1. All members in attendance rose and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board Chair then moved onto Agenda Item #2. The Board took some time to review the minutes from 2/20/2019 and 3/4/2019. Mr. Mashburn and Ms. Lippman noted some grammatical errors. Mr. Harmon acknowledged and corrected the errors. Ms. Bilbo made a motion to accept the revised minutes. Ms. Lippman indicated that she would rather vote on the minutes individually (due to her not being in attendance for one of the meetings). Mr. Doyle agreed. Ms. Bilbo revised her motion to only include the 2/20/2019 meeting minutes. Ms. Smith seconded; 9 in favor. Ms. Lippman abstained. Ms. Bilbo then introduced a motion to accept the revised 3/4/2019 meeting minutes. Ms. Smith again seconded; 9 in favor. Mr. Doyle abstained.

Board Chair then moved discussion to Agenda Item #3. Ms. Smith offered the Board a recap of the recent Tri-Board meeting. During discussion of the recap, Ms. Lippman was also able to offer a recap of the Town's first School Building Committee meeting. She specifically talked about the Feasibility Study and noted that many of the education professionals on that Board were comfortable with the quoted price of the Study (\$750,000). Mr. Waszak asked if there were any offsetting grants available. Mr. Waitkevitch responded that he understood the price to be partially reimbursable.

Ms. Smith then asked why the Capital Committee suggests bonding as a funding source for some of the capital items to be included in the FY20 budget. Mr. Waitkevitch explained that any capital improvement over a certain price is eligible for bonding. He mentioned that the details were available in the Fiscal Guidelines.

Board Chair then moved discussion to Agenda Item #4. Mr. Harmon provided an update to the Board on the Fiscal Guidelines Subcommittee's activities. He described three projects being addressed by the Subcommittee. First is a checklist related to the recently adopted Fiscal Guidelines. The checklist could be used by the Board to evaluate matters before it. Second, the Subcommittee is talking about multi-year financial goals. Lastly, the Subcommittee has discussed how to distill guideline information into usable metrics.

Board Chair then moved discussion to Agenda Item #5. Mr. Waitkevitch indicated that his discussions about this matter with Town Information Technology is ongoing. He noted that the documents in the Resource Center would be considered part of Open Meeting Law.

Board Chair then moved discussion to Agenda Item #6. Mr. Mashburn asked whether the Board can recommend specific changes to the proposed FY20 budget. Mr. Waitkevitch noted (with all appropriate caveats) that he felt the Board did have the power to make specific recommendations about the budget. His feeling though was that the Board has not performed enough due diligence to undertake that type of effort for this budget. That being said, he indicated that the proposed FY20 budget did not seem inappropriate.

After a brief discussion, the Board agreed that its role in this budget process was to set personal opinions about what should be done with the Town's finances aside. The more appropriate approach would be to understand what the Town officials were attempting to do with the budget. And from there, the Board should evaluate whether the Town is working toward those goals in a fiscally responsible way.

Mr. Doyle asked whether the Town engages in any residential surveys or data collection. He stated that such a collection of information would help focus the Board on what the priorities of the citizens actually are. Ms. Bilbo indicated that the Town does not really do those types of collections. The Board then discussed the representative (or lack thereof) nature of Town Meeting.

Mr. Waitkevitch drew the conversation back to budget recommendations and mentioned that the Board should consider how some budget line items are funded through alternative revenue sources. Mr. Mashburn agreed and added that there is no way to tell what items in the Town are funded through grants. He then laid out some scenarios on how the Town could represent those grants.

Mr. Waszak then attempted to recap his understanding of the recommendation process. That individual Board members would review the entire budget with special emphasis on their department assignments. They would then ask follow up questions to the department heads and bring that feedback to the Board in the next meeting for discussion. At Town Meeting, the Board would then offer a recommendation as to each department's budget.

Ms. Smith clarified that the budget is presented as one Warrant Article. So there would not be a departmental breakdown at Town Meeting. Mr. Harmon added that the recommendation from the Board at town Meeting is essentially a 'yes' or 'no' recommendation. He then posed the question of what if the Board opts not to recommend this budget. Mr. Waitkevitch explained that the Board would have to work with the Town to present an acceptable budget to Town Meeting. He suggested that as the Board reviews the budget in the next meeting that we make notes as we go along to present cohesive points to our ultimate recommendation.

Ms. Lippman recommended that the Board talk to the Town administrator as clarification of what the Board can and cannot do in this process.

The Board then began a brief discussion about how the Town treats new employment positions in its budgets. Whether or not proration of salary is an appropriate course of action.

Mr. Waitkevitch asked whether the Board felt it could complete its entire recommendation process in the next meeting (April 1). It was agreed that the Board would try, but also allow for an additional meeting on April 18th if necessary.

Board Chair then moved discussion to Agenda Item #7. Mr. Waszak relayed to the Board that he had performed some basic analysis on the current budget against the top-line fiscal guidelines. His analysis showed that the Town was coming up short of its guidelines in the proposed budget but noted that improvements were present in the current budget.

Mr. Waitkevitch added that no one ever presents these types of metrics at Town Meeting and that the Board should help make those types of changes in the communication of this information.

Board Chair then moved discussion to Agenda Item #8. There was a discussion about distributing meeting minutes prior to the meeting. Mr. Waszak made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Mashburn seconded. All in favor.