

Stoneham Finance & Advisory Board Meeting  
Wednesday, September 10, 2020 - 7:00 pm  
All Members Attending Remotely

Attendees:

Tim Waitkevitch, Chair  
Cory Mashburn, Vice Chair  
Andrew Harmon, Secretary

Julianne Bovat      Youlia Bowerman  
Jen Gray              Ed Hurley  
Mike Memmolo      Wendy Smith  
Dave Tammaro

*Absent:* Jeremy Doyle

Guests:

Dennis Sheehan, Town Administrator

Agenda:

1. Meeting Minutes
2. October Town Meeting Warrant
3. FAB Department and Subcommittee Assignments
4. FAB Goals
5. Updates
  - a. Capital
  - b. School Building Committee
6. Other Business - Non Deliberative
7. Adjournment

Minutes:

The Finance & Advisory Board Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Mr. Waitkevitch opened the meeting with Agenda Item #1. The Board was asked to review the minutes for 7/6/2020 and 8/12/2020. Mr. Memmolo introduced a motion to accept the 7/6/2020 minutes as written. Ms. Smith seconded; all members in favor. Ms. Smith then introduced a motion to accept the 8/12/2020 meeting minutes as written. Mr. Memmolo seconded; all members in favor.

Broad Chair then moved discussion to Agenda Item #2. Mr. Waitkevitch introduced Dennis Sheehan to provide an overview of the October Town Meeting Warrant. Mr. Sheehan began

with an explanation of the proposed Capital expenditures outlined in Article #1. He compared the original (pre-COVID) Town Meeting Capital request to the Capital Article that was ultimately passed. He then provided updates on the status of the Capital projects approved in Town Meeting. Next, Mr. Sheehan provided a comparison of the projects removed from the original Town Meeting Article and how the Town ultimately decided on the items that will appear in October Town Meeting's Article.

Mr. Sheehan noted that the funding source for the Article Capital items is Free Cash. The Free Cash number is currently at about \$4M. He emphasized the continued upward trend of the Free Cash number. Mr. Waitkevitch asked what factors contribute to the consistent increases in Free Cash. Mr. Sheehan attributed the number to a combination of Meals Tax revenue, Property Tax revenue, the fact that State Aid came in level this year, and fiscal discipline of Town departments.

Ms. Smith then asked for a recap on certain items included in the current Article. Mr. Hurley asked about the Public Works requests from the last Warrant and what was the status of those items. Mr. Sheehan responded that the departments are already working on Capital requests for the next Fiscal Year and he expects those to be included from Public Works.

Ms. Gray then stated that only about \$800K in Free Cash was being used for Capital items. She asked Mr. Sheehan what the Town intended to do with the remaining funds. He responded that the remaining Free Cash will stay where it is and help achieve the Town's goals around increasing the Stabilization Fund.

The Board then discussed the merits of voting on the Warrant Articles in this meeting or after the Select Board has approved the Articles. It was decided to defer that decision until after the Board had discussed all the Articles.

Mr. Waitkevitch then steered discussion to Warrant Article #2. Mr. Sheehan discussed the nature of the Article which is meant to provide additional funding to some areas in the approved budget. This is being done because the level funding of State Aid gives the Town more flexibility. The Town had projected a 16% shortfall in State Aid. Mr. Waitkevitch asked about State funding sources beyond State Aid. The Town saw a slight (\$100K) increase in charter school tuition. He mentioned that Local Receipts could be down 16%-18%. The golf course has been successful, but there is still uncertainty around the arena (pending direction from the MIAA).

Ms. Smith asked whether the Town will go into next year projecting a 16% decrease in State Aid. Mr. Sheehan acknowledged that the Town would be keeping a close eye on any publicly available information, as well as information from the State Delegation (Senator Lewis and Representative Day). Ms. Gray asked about the adjustments to Health Insurance costs. Mr. Sheehan attributed these small changes to enrollment realities. Mr. Memmolo asked whether every Town was level-funded by the State this year. Mr. Sheehan said that they were.

Mr. Memmolo then asked about timing on the new firefighter position. The Town expects the new firefighter to start sometime in October. Mr. Memmolo also asked about collective bargaining. Mr. Sheehan acknowledged that collective bargaining has been difficult under COVID, but the Town is trying to factor in long-term unknowns.

Mr. Waitkevitch then steered discussion to Warrant Article #3. Mr. Sheehan explained that the Article is meant to memorialize the merger of certain functions of the School Department with the Town. He then went on to provide a summary of the new Facilities department, as well as the work of the new Procurement officer. The Town is also hiring a new Budget Director.

Mr. Tamarro asked whether the Town expects to see any cost-savings from the operational efficiencies outlined in Article #3. Mr. Sheehan opined that the changes are not necessarily intended to save money, but are more meant to reduce liability.

The Board then discussed again about when to vote on the Warrant Articles. It was decided that the Board would vote in this session. With the understanding that if there are changes after review by the Select Board, a new vote would be held. Mr. Harmon then introduced a motion for favorable action on Article #1. Ms. Gray seconded; all in favor. Ms. Gray then introduced a motion for favorable action on Article #2. Mr. Harmon seconded; all in favor. Ms. Gray then introduced a motion for favorable action on Article #3. Mr. Memmolo seconded; all in favor.

Mr. Sheehan then asked the Board to consider discussing Agenda Item #5 out of order. Mr. Mashburn (as Board representative on the School Building Committee) informed the Board that the next meeting of the Committee will include a vote on the various designs provided by the architects. This vote will allow the Town to take the winning designs to the State. Mr. Sheehan quickly reviewed the options currently on the table. He mentioned that the Committee would hold a community forum on September 23rd.

Mr. Sheehan then exited the meeting. The Board Chair then moved discussion to Agenda Item #3. Mr. Harmon updated the Board on new designations to the Department subcommittees. He noted Mr. Memmolo has joined the Police and Fire subcommittees. Mr. Waitkevitch then provided the Board with a reminder on the purpose and functions of the Departmental Subcommittees. Veteran members of the Board (Mashburn, Harmon, Smith, Waitkevitch) then shared their experiences with the process.

Ms. Bovat then volunteered to join the Town Hall functions subcommittee. Mr. Waitkevitch then moved the discussion to the functional subcommittee assignments. Mr. Harmon provided an update on the staffing of the subcommittees. He noted the challenges in moving forward on the Resource Center.

Board Chair then moved discussion to Agenda Item #4. Mr. Waitkevitch briefly summarized the current proposed goals for the Board:

1. Improve the Board's role in the budget process
2. More frequent communications with department heads
3. Increase communications between the Finance Board and other Town Committees

Mr. Waitkevitch then noted that the Board will have a standing agenda item in future meetings related to Water & Sewer Board updates. This would fit into the 3rd proposed goal. Mr. Harmon suggested the Board go slow on starting on the 2nd goal. This would allow time for the Town to get through the October Town Meeting and allow department heads to get a clearer idea on this year's budget process.

Mr. Tamarro and Ms. Bowerman both asked questions related to why and how the Board would achieve their goals. Mr. Waitkevitch summarized the functions of the Board in relation to the larger functioning of the Town. The main goal is ensuring the financial health of the Town. He suggested our goals be assessed within this framework. Ms. Gray added that the goals have the effect of increasing the Board's visibility into the happenings within Town government. Without active observation, we need to rely on what we are told.

Mr. Waitkevitch asked the Board to review these goals and be prepared at the next meeting to talk about specific areas within these goals that the Board should focus its energy for this year. Ms. Smith suggested we start by acquiring away our subcommittee assignments as soon as possible. Ms. Gray asked that Mr. Harmon send out a new updated list of the subcommittee membership. And the Board uses that email as a catalyst to begin internal discussions about group leadership.

The Board Chair then moved discussion to Agenda Item #6. The Board discussed the upcoming calendar. The Board decided that the next meeting would take place on October 8th. Mr. Harmon then introduced a motion to adjourn. Mr. Mashburn seconded; all in favor.