

Finance Board Meeting Minutes: July 21st, 2014

Attendees: *George McCormack, Rachel Meredith-Warren, Caroline Colarusso, Julie Desimone, Ben Caggiano; Stephen Dapkiewicz, Devon Manchester, George Georgountzos, Patricia Walsh*

Mr. Dapkiewicz called the meeting to order at 7:32pm.

First on the agenda, Mr. Dapkiewicz asked if there were any minutes to be approved. Mr. McCormack said that the only minutes awaiting approval are from the June 9, 2014 meeting and he circulated those in June. Mr. Dapkiewicz said we will allow people time to review them and vote on them at the Board's next meeting in August.

Mr. Dapkiewicz opened up discussion of the second agenda item, DPW/Water & Sewer Operations.

Mr. Dapkiewicz showed everyone an example of recommended budget presentation formatting from the state Division of Local Services' guidance on enterprise funds. He also showed the most recent budget presentation on Water & Sewer Enterprise that the Board was given. He suggested that the Town should bring their budget presentation into alignment with the state recommendations. Several members of the board expressed support of this idea.

Ms. Walsh said her analysis showed that 65% of DPW staff wages and 50% of overtime are paid with funds from the Water & Sewer Enterprise Fund. The Board does not know if these figures correspond to how much time DPW staff spend on Water & Sewer work. Ms. Walsh expressed the concern that the Water & Sewer Enterprise Fund may be used to pay costs unrelated to Water & Sewer work. Mr. Dapkiewicz also read state guidance which recommends that municipalities develop written policy for indirect cost allocations.

Mr. Frank Pignone, an audience member expressed his concern that the Water & Sewer Enterprise Fund functions as an indirect way of increasing the town budget contrary to the spirit of Proposition 2 1/2., which limits property tax increases to 2 1/2 % annually.

Ms. Colarusso asked in what format the DPW time cards were kept. Are they electronic or paper? Are they tallied by categories of work? The time cards should illuminate the question of whether staff spends 65% of work hours on Water & Sewer work.

Ms. Colarusso described that the current contract with the DPW union members restricts work hours to 7:30am to 3:30pm. Any work outside of that time frame is paid at an overtime rate. She said that this does not make sense when there is routine, knowable work to be done outside those hours. Ms. Colarusso said that when the union contract is negotiated, this is an example of a stipulation that could be reformed and brought up to date with current needs in the town. She recommended that DPW management use the contract negotiation period to better meet the service and budget needs of the town.

An audience member questioned whether the Stevens St. trash center, which operates outside of normal DPW operating hours, is operating at an overtime rate.

Ms. Colarusso emphasized that it is a management choice to make a change like altering the operating hours.

Mr. Pignone, audience member, expressed his concern that some water users are either not metered at all, or have antiquated or incorrectly functioning water meters. He feels that having 14% of our water supply unaccounted for is too much. The state average is 10%.

The Board agreed that it would be desirable for the Town Administrator and DPW Director to attend our next meeting in August. At that time, the Board would like:

- To see a budget presentation which show all FY15 projected sources of revenue managed by the DPW Director, including Water & Sewer Enterprise Fund, municipal funds and any other sources. The Board would also like to see the spending allocations planned for these revenue sources. The Board would like to see these figures for FY15 and the actual figures for FY14 as a contextual comparison. The Board would like the format of this presentation to be the same as the example described above from the Mass. Division of Local Services;
- To know how the details of the time card process at the DPW;
- To know the process in place for allocating DPW staff time among different functions/departments.

The Board would also like to know whether the Town has a written policy regarding enterprise funds and indirect expense allocation.

Mr. Dapkiewicz agreed to pursue these matters with the Town Administrator, DPW Director and Town Accountant.

Agenda item number three concerned the Bikeway/Greenway and the state of encroachers on the Railroad Right of Way. The Board discussed the anticipated litigation against remaining encroachers, but no one was fully current on the situation.

Agenda item number four concerned a status update on Weiss Farm. Mr. Georgeontzos said the Developer has filed an application with the Zoning Board of Appeals. The ZBA hearing will open on Thursday night 7/24/14. The ZBA has 180 days to render a decision on permitting after opening the hearing. Ms. Meredith-Warren said that until the town has prepared a long term plan for providing housing to meet the needs of the community, we will be in a weakened position. She recommended a housing production plan to begin to give residents some control over siting of 40B housing and allowing ZBA decisions to be upheld in Housing Appeals Court cases. She expressed her concern that currently a 40B project could be built on any property in town, regardless of zoning. 40B, by its intent, overrides existing zoning. The next Weiss Farm could be built anywhere in town.

Agenda item five concerned identification of Board priorities for FY15. Ms. Meredith-Warren said she would like to study the town's sources of income in greater depth and compare them to neighboring communities. Mr. Manchester said he didn't understand why the town would need more income. Mr. Georgeontzos said she might mean, for example, that our sources of commercial taxes are lower than would be desirable, leaving a greater burden on residential

property taxes. Ms. Meredith-Warren commented that she was also concerned about the low level of Chapter 70/school funding, as well as local aid. She stated that she would like to establish the existing state of income sources in town. Mr. Manchester agreed that this made sense.

The Board agreed to meet on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month in FY15.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM

Respectfully,

Rachel Meredith-Warren