

Finance Board Meeting Minutes: October 6, 2014

Attendees: *Stephen Dapkiewicz, George McCormack, Rachel Meredith-Warren, Colarusso Colarusso, Ben Caggiano, Patricia Walsh*

Mr. Dapkiewicz called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30pm.

First on the agenda, Mr. Dapkiewicz asked if there were any meeting minutes to be approved. Mr. McCormack said that the minutes from September 29, 2014 were ready. Mr. McCormack asked if people were willing to accept the change by Ms. Meredith-Warren, in reference to the farmers' market, replace "SNAP" with "serving people of all income levels." Ms. Meredith-Warren made a motion to accept the minutes including this change. Mrs. Walsh seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously accepted.

Next on the agenda were the warrant articles for the school department. Dr. Olson, Superintendent, came to explain the four articles from the school department. The articles all concern easements and use of small (generally less than 500SF) patches of land in the access way in front of the new middle school building. Ms. Meredith-Warren asked about the financial impact on the town. Dr. Olson responded that beyond minor filing fees, no impact was anticipated. Russ Wilson made four separate motions to recommend favorable action on each school department article. Mr. McCormack seconded each motion. Each motion was unanimously accepted.

Next Anthony Wilson came to speak about the articles put forth by the Greenway committee. The continuation of the Greenway across Montvale Avenue will require construction of permanent improvements and a permanent easement of approximately 150 square feet across private owned land. Project designers have identified two possible crossing locations. The option closer to the intersection of Montvale Avenue and Main Street in the westerly direction appears to be the safer crossing option. It allows for much greater site line distance for pedestrians, allowing them to see oncoming traffic. The cost of the easement will be born by the town of Stoneham. Given that it's such a small area of land, it is not expected to be a significant amount in the context of the town's budget. It is expected to be of trifling value in that context. The assessor's office is currently working on a preliminary cost estimate for the easement. This number is not final and will be coordinated together with the State, which is running the Greenway construction project.

The Greenway committee's otherwise article concerns approval of the list of construction easements that will be required for the project. These are temporary easements that will be removed after construction is complete.

Mr. Wilson said that the project is expected to go out to construction bidding in August 2015 which means that construction is likely to start in the spring of 2016.

The Greenway committee wants town meeting to decide which crossing to use. Ms. Meredith-Warren suggested representation for the town of Stoneham at construction meetings during

construction of the Greenway. This should be an item carried in the state budget for the project, not a cost to be carried by the town.

No votes were taken on the Greenway committee articles as the board is awaiting further information from the committee, including a more final number on the cost of the small permanent easement over private property.

The next warrant article concern 42 Pleasant St. The proposed purchaser and developer of the site would like to have the site rezoned for multifamily housing of low density. Attorney Charles Houghton who spoke on behalf of the project represents the developer. The total number of housing units on the site has been reduced from 25 to 21 since the project last came before the finance board in the spring of 2014. Current taxes on the property are approximately \$21,000 dollars per year. Taxes are estimated to increase to \$24,000 dollars next year. The developer estimates that upon completion of the new development, the property would generate approximately \$115,500 in real estate taxes per year. The property is currently zone for business. A traffic study recently completed for the site. The study projected an average of 15 additional trips along Pleasant St. at peak commute times in the morning as well as 17 additional trips during weekday afternoon peak. Mr. McCormack expressed concern about the single entry exit way into the development. Ms. Meredith-Warren reiterated her concerns the town lacks a coherent plan that is comprehensive in nature for the location of developments around town. This project proposes to change zoning for a site and without a larger plan in place there's no way to determine whether or not changing the zoning on the site is really truly desirable for the town in the long-term. Mr. Wilson expressed concern about the density level of the site.

Mr. Houghton explained that if the article is supported at town meeting, the next step for the developer will be to pursue a special permit. After that, the project would go to site plan review and would also be subject to conservation committee review. The developer estimates that the project would require two years from the commencement of construction to sale of condominium units. The finance board decided not to Take a vote on the matter until members had a chance to review the traffic study more detail.

Mr. Caggiano then spoke about the Department of Public Works articles for Town Meeting. The first DPW article concerns the acceptance of chapter 90 state funds for road construction. The article asks for acceptance of \$486,167. There is currently a balance of \$77,000 in the Chapter 90 account. Mr. Wilson asked if we could get a better sense of the plans for the use of the funds, a more granular understanding of how the money is to be spent. The board agreed to delay vote on this article until Mr. Grover, head of the DPW, could come to help us understand better.

The second DPW article concerns acceptance of \$814,000 from the MWRA for the sewer system. 75% of the money in the warrant article would be grants and 25% would be a no interest loan of up to 10 years to be paid back from sewer revenues. Mr. Caggiano explained that this is a much better blend of grant to debt than the MWRA has offered in past years. He explained that there's currently \$400,000 remaining in the sewer account from Spring Town Meeting. A board member asked to understand why the amount remains from the spring. No vote was taken pending clarification of this account with Mr. Grover.

The third DPW article concerns setting aside funds for a drainage study of Spencer Street which is the road that lies behind the Fusion Taste restaurant. The board would like to better understand the drainage problem there. No vote was taken pending further discussion of this article with Mr. Grover.

DPW's fourth article concerns the embellishment of Lindenwood Cemetery. The board would like clarification that this money is coming from the trust fund established for less money. This information could also be provided by Mr. Grover.

Next, the board discussed the Fire Department article concerning purchase of a new vehicle. No vote was taken as the board would like Chief Rolli to come in and help explain his article.

Next, The board considered the trash fee reduction article. This article would be the first phase of reducing the trash fee for FY15. Mr. Manchester made a motion in favor of the article. Ms. Meredith-Warren seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor of the article.

The board next considered the article regarding snow and ice. Ms. Meredith-Warren made a motion to view the article favorably. Ms. Colarusso seconded the motion. The board voted unanimously in favor of the article.

Next, the board discussed the food truck article. Members have questions about the vacancy rate impact on business in town if food trucks were allowed in town. The board would also like to know which specific neighboring towns allow food trucks. No vote was taken on this pending further discussion of article with Selectmen Boussy.

The board next considered the façade improvement program article in the amount of \$30,000. Mrs. Walsh suggested that the town partner with local banks to do underwriting for the program. Mr. Wilson asked why the town planner's work was subject to approval of the town administrator instead of the selectmen. Several members of the board suggested that it would be helpful to see draft program documents. Mr. McCormack expressed concern that The the program consisted of loans as well as grants. No vote was taken.

The next article considered the farmers market reestablishment article. This article would allocate \$2500 as seed money for marketing and organizing expenses for the town committee that has been working to reestablish the farmers market. Mr. Manchester made a motion to view the article favorably. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion. The board voted unanimously in favor of the article.

The board next considered the Council on Aging's article to take approximately \$18,000 dollars of free cash and use it to fund the full CoA budget request for FY 15. As background, the COA had requested approximately \$24,000 to make some part-time staff members available for greater number of hours each week. In the town administrator's budget, which was approved at spring Town Meeting, the CoA received only \$6,000 of their full budget request. This article would fully fund their budget proposal for FY 15. Ms. Colarusso commented that she's been spending a great deal of time at the senior center as of late and has seen that it's services are important and much in demand in town. Ms. Meredith Warren recalled that the Council on aging

serves approximately 900 people each week with a budget of about \$130,000 dollars for the entire department. Mr. Wilson made a motion to look favorably upon the article. Ms. Colarusso seconded the motion. The board voted unanimously in favor of the article.

Mr. Manchester made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Colarusso. The board voted unanimously to adjourn at approximately 10pm.