Finance and Warrant Committee

May 15 2017

Mr. Lindemann not present initially but arrived later.

Meeting began at 6:01

Mr. Heffernan covered the subjects that would be discussed at the meeting. He informed the committee that tonight they would have an opportunity to discuss unfinished warrant articles.

Ms. Fay pointed out that the Tedeschi’s liquor license article only had 8 votes in favor, not the full 9. She explained that the town may be unsure how to interpret the position of the Finance Committee. Mr. Heffernan explained that the subject of alcohol sales is typically fairly polarizing, and that people may be able to interpret this information on their own.

Ms. Carney pointed out that many locations in the Oakdale area had liquor sales available in the past.

Mr. Heffernan called attention to Article 33, Birch Street. The committee had not voted on this in the past in anticipation of more information being made available.

The committee was informed that the layout has been made available in the town clerk’s office, and that all neighbors have agreed to the waiver necessary for this Article to move forward.

Mr. Preston moved that Article 33 be so voted, Mr. Hughes seconded. It was voted 8-0.

Mr. Robert’s moved that Article 8 be considered. Mr. Preston seconded. It was voted 8-0.

Mr. Heffernan called attention to the additional information made available on Article 8.

Ms. Carney asked how the value had changed. She was informed it was brought up to date with the final snow and ice values. Mr. Hughes asked what the final value was. Mr. Kern informed him that it was just over 1 million dollars.

Mr. Preston moved that the full amount be transferred to meet expenses for the current fiscal year. Mr. Robert’s seconded. It was voted 7-1. Ms. Carney opposed.

Mr. Heffernan pointed to the reserve fund transfer request, $3000 transferred for sick leave appropriation buyback for fourth-quarter payment. Ms. Carney asked if the 100 dollars for not calling in sick benefit was involved in that total

Ms. Baker explained that the benefit in question was removed from a collective bargaining agreement, resulting in them reducing their appropriation for sick leave benefits. Unfortunately, it seems that value was reduced by too much and they need to catch back up on it.

Ms. Carney asked how much this item cost last year. Ms. Baker explained that she does not have the value prepared at this time. Ms. Fay asked which departments still have the sick leave incentive. Ms. Baker explained that there are several units that do not get these benefits but she does not have a complete list at this time.

Ms. Fay asked if this money was needed to meet contractual obligations. Ms. Baker answered yes.

Mr. Preston moved to transfer $3,000 dollars from the reserve fund to line item 1135 Department 105 account 11960. Mr. Roberts seconded. It was voted 6-2 Ms. Emery Butler and Ms. Carney opposed

Mr. Hughes noted that he was opposed to the benefit, but agreed the contractual obligation needed to be met.

Mr. Heffernan read the 3rd reserve fund transfer request, for additional overtime expenses.

Ms. Baker explained that there are many sources of overtime depending on the time of year. This time of year in particular is a great deal of work for taxes.

Mr. Preston moved to transfer $7,500 to the Central Overtime account line item 11385 Department 105 account 1300 from the reserve fund. Mr. Roberts seconded. It was voted 8-0.

Mr. Heffernan offered an opportunity to review questions prior to town meeting.

Ms. Carney asked if they could not spend time on June 19th to have these discussions. Mr. Heffernan answered that there will only be 7 members at that meeting, and that this may be a better opportunity for discussion. He offered the committee could wait if they wished to discuss things then. Ms. O’Donnell explained that she has notes she would like to discuss but not until June 19th.

Mr. Heffernan explained the importance of the committee meeting after the Town Meeting to discuss their new methods of Benchmarking.

Mr. Lindemann arrived at 6:23.

Ms. Fay raised concerns about new information that came up at the Mini Town Meeting. She explained that it makes her feel dissatisfied about their deliberations when they are made without the complete information available. She explained that the Readeville rail yard issue is one such example, and she feels the information was not explained to the committee.

Mr. Preston explained that he feels the Readeville rail yard appropriation was simply for studies about the property, which is important. He feels that at town meeting the subject was politicized and associated with polarizing local projects even though the investigation of the property was not associated with that project, the Rail Trail.

Ms. Fay explained that it feels that at the Mini Town Meeting, the subject was raised that the land was polluted and unfit for human usage. Mr. Preston explained that finding concrete answers to these suspicions is one of the values of these proposed studies.

Ms. Carney said that there is no proposed use of that land, and that its level of decontamination will vary based on information gathered during the studies of the land and future proposed use.

Ms. Fay raised concerns that there was misinformation spread in the mini-town meeting that the committee was unable to refute because they did not have complete information on the project. She feels that this misinformation has caused confusion about the role of the committee

Mr. Preston explained that he feels we need to be fully informed as to the qualities of the land parcel.

Mr. Roberts agreed that being fully aware of the state of that property is important for the town to be able to make informed decisions about the land.

Ms. Baker clarified that the parcel is MBTA owned, and that the MBTA is selling off land rapidly. Ms. Baker explained that the parcel is assessed at $700,000 and the MBTA does not pay taxes to the town. It will eventually be developed, and the town needs to consider how much control it wishes to exert over future development. It is currently zones Single Residence B. The investigation is in part to see whether it is wise for the town to acquire the parcel. $10,000 dollars have been allocated for these purposes. She expressed regret that this misinformation has spread about the parcel.

Mr. Heffernan explained that with these public projects, there are often misconceptions. He explained that he would prefer this come up at the mini town meeting so that it does not happen at the full town meeting.

Mr. Preston explained that the land may very well be polluted, but either way it needs to be studied.

Mr. Hughes agreed that he feels the public seems to be very polarized about the potential Rail Trail, and are attaching the idea of the Rail Trail to many local projects that aren’t really related.

Ms. Fay asked if there was any additional information available to the committee. Ms. Baker explained that the copies out front were all that are available.

Ms. O’Donnell said that she feels Ms. Fay raised a good point, and the committee needs to gather as much information as possible so they can be knowledgeable about these questions.

Ms. Baker offered that she and Mr. Kern are available as a resource to the committee. She agreed that townsfolk who are invested in certain subject can sometimes focus on irrelevant aspects of a project.

Mr. Roberts said that the committee could use more time to analyze questions and concerns leading up to the town meeting if they wanted to feel better prepared.

Ms. Emery Butler asked if she could call in June 19th if she is still on vacation at the time. Ms. Baker explained that there must be a quorum of the Finance Committee present in the room.

Mr. Heffernan stated that quorum for the Finance Committee is 5 members.

Ms. Fay asked if the Selectmen’s vote on Article 12 was unanimous.

Mr. Heffernan explained that the committee would review and potentially approve their minutes on June 19th. Mr. Preston asked what else would be discussed on June 19th. Mr. Heffernan answered that plans for the committee moving forward as well as concerns from the past season would be raised.

Mr. Lindemann asked when they would be discussing zero-base budgeting. He asked if the meeting on the 19th would have someone to clarify and define their zero-base budgeting plans.

Mr. Heffernan stated that the last meeting of the committee’s year would be June 19th. The next meeting would take place in July with a new committee chair.

Mr. Preston moved to adjourn. Mr. Hughes seconded. It was voted 9-0

Meeting adjourned at 6:44.