

December 13, 2019 Room 204, Acton Town Hall, 7:30 AM

Present: Bart Wendell, facilitator; Joan Gardner and Jon Benson, Board of Selectmen; Christi Andersen and Roland Bourdon, FinCom; Diane Baum and Amy Krishnamurthy, Regional School Committee; John Mangiaratti, Peter Light, Marie Altieri and Steve Barrett, staff.

Audience: David Martin, BoS; Dave Verdolino, School finance director, Brian McMullen, Asst. Board of assessors & finance director.

Extra Documents: Agenda; Three sets of minutes, 9/19, 10/10 & 10/30; Town of Acton multi-year financial model; Comparison between ALG meetings; Minuteman RVT preliminary budget assessments; Minuteman sheet with operating and debt service changes between 10/30 and 12/13.

1. The three sets of minutes were accepted.

2. FY 20

John: we are working on the budget; we will set the tax rate on Monday. The selectmen got the budget on 12/02. We got some state grants: \$10K for fire equipment; \$10K for traffic safety. We have set up a clear government financial site: Actonma.cleargov.com

Peter: FY 20 is on track; goals to reduce turn back to 1/2 of 1% --but it's too early to predict. We've received an \$80K grant for safety security; cyber security and an audit with staff training.

3. FY 21 Revenue Projections

Steve Barrett went over the changes made to the model since last meeting. The estimated numbers for the fire station and schools has been added along with a preliminary number for minuteman. The tax levy is at the maximum for Prop. 2.5; state aid is level funded (although there may be additional changes in late Jan.); local receipts are also level funded. The Town managers budget is at a 3% increase, down from 3.75% a savings of \$268,962; schools has an assessment of 3.98% down from 4.23% a savings of \$148,228; Minuteman operating budget estimate was \$1,263,946 and is now \$1,404,761 which is an increase of \$140K. That puts the net position at (\$902,147)

4. STM discussion/special election

There was general praise and happiness at the outcome of both the Boxboro and Acton STM on the votes for the school and for Acton the vote for the fire station as well. Jason Cole was cited for his excellent presentation and everyone agreed that it was the hard work and inter-committee cooperation that led to the positive results. Joan put in a plug for the GIS system and maps which were so helpful for the fire station. The number of public information meetings and coffee meetings were noted as other elements that led to the positive outcome. There was a general feeling that the ballot votes would also be positive for the projects.

Bart noted that the inception of the ALG was based on the need for inter-board cooperation and that it was recognized, before the ALG was formed that if the committees did not work together that nothing would be accomplished.

5. POV---this was removed from the agenda

6. Review of Multi-year financial model.

Steve noted that the recent communications from Minuteman with the increases in assessments have thrown the model off scale.

In the communication from Minuteman the preliminary assessments were characterized as being “the worse[sic] case scenario” due to the increase in the debt service for the newer bond issues and the enrollment increase. .

In October the operating costs were estimated at \$1,263,946; and the Minuteman debt service at \$423,824 with a total of \$1,687,770. By December 12 the operating increased to \$1,404,761 a rise of \$140,851 (11% increase) while the HS debt dropped to \$341,621, a decrease of \$82,203 (-19%). The overall change percentage is 3%.

It was agreed that the town needed to discover why these increases were being charged and what the town could do to lessen the burden.

Steve explained that these increases were not foreseen in this amount and they are causing a disruption (larger deficit) in the model.

The discussion revolved around the now expected impact of an additional \$90K deficit and how that could not be absorbed under present budget presentations.

Christi noted that the MM increase had a per pupil cost of \$47K while ABRHS was \$15K. The imbalance was not sustainable.

It was agreed that something had to be done and the first step was communication between the town and the MM district. The report will come at the next ALG meeting

7. Meeting schedule

John reported that the town was having their budget Saturday on Wednesday Jan. 8. He did not expect any answer from MM before the 30th.

So the question was; is another meeting in Jan. necessary? At present one is scheduled for the 10th and another for the 21st.

Marie noted that the SC has to vote their budget by Feb. 15 and the gap must be stabilized before then.

It was agreed to have the next meeting Tuesday, January 21, Wednesday, Feb 5th at 6:30 PM followed by a second February meeting on the 27th at 7:30 AM.

8. Public Comment

No comments

Marie said she wanted to go back to the MM problem and stressed how important it was for the MM debt exclusion vote to pass at the ballot. She suggested that people call people to remind them of its importance. The schools cannot absorb the extra \$1m cost.

Adjourned at 8:15 (everyone wished each other a Happy Holiday)

Ann Chang

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