

ALG Minutes November 19, 2020. 8:30 AM via Zoom

Present: Bart Wendell, Facilitator; Jon Benson and Dean Charter, BoS: John Petersen and Amy Krishnamurthy, SC; Christi Andersen and Christine Russell, FC; John Mangiaratti, Peter Light, Steve Barrett, and Marie Altieri, Staff. Public: Dave Verdolino, finance director ABRSD, Charlie Kadlec (there may have been others which I did not see)

Extra information: Agenda; October Minutes with revised ALG Ground Rules and Charter; Town of Acton Multi-year financial model

I. Regular Business

1. Minutes. The Minutes of October 29 were accepted.

II. FY 21 Update

JM: we continue to closely monitor revenues and spending. We are trying to insure that the expenses we are spending for COVID are covered; the requirements seem to be changing. We have just gotten another grant which will be announced this afternoon. I'll share it with you later.

SB: our general operations are "yellow caution" Town Hall is still closed and we have had to slow down on our reopening plans. Everyone is wearing masks and we are doing a lot of work remotely. Offices in planning and finance are open by appointment and meetings are done outside at the picnic tables. Christen Alexander has set up a citizen, customer service hot-line which is getting a lot of use. People in Town Hall are working very hard.

On the financial side we are moving quarter-by-quarter. Nov. 1st tax bill has 98% year-to-date but right now the banks are reviewing records as the year moves on the collection rate will be higher. Our biggest revenue is the property tax which funds 92-93% of our operations. Our interest income is down but the good news is that the borrowing rates are also down; meals taxes are down; local receipts are down; we expect an increase in revenue in Feb. with the excise tax returns. We have to do some critical safety hires in the DPW; we are keeping close watch on the CARES revenues so that we do not have ineligible expenses. It seems that some of the regulations are changing.

Peter: we are under intense pressure from the Governor to open fully. The local public health numbers are not all that great. It's a challenge. For two months we had 10 cases; since Nov. 1 we've had 19. This is a significant increase but there is no evidence of the spread inside the schools. We have installed air purifiers across the district---this has been costly but it's unreasonable to keep the windows open. We watch the public health numbers and considered testing

programs; to test a ten –week program would be \$1.2m; we don't have any state direction; I wish I had better news.

Bart: any comments?

Christie: I thought that Gov. Baker's guidance came with funding for the schools.

Peter: there is no direct funding. In the testing program the rapid test is not reliable; they only tested those with symptoms and not those a-systematic.

III. ALG model

SB: no changes since last meeting. We are backing up the entities; working on the budgets as yet we do not have active budget numbers; we have a \$1.6m deficit; we will use 1,150K in reserves; free cash has been certified at \$3.754.

We need to retain reserve levels; we cannot depend on reserve replacement through replenishment; we cannot see the revenues being greater than the budget needs; we cannot depend on a \$1.3m turn back; we would have to have a growth in local aid and receipts; everything came to a stop last March and I don't think we can depend on things being the same as before.

Christie: we need to have a productive conversation on policy at the next meeting

IV. School building

Peter: on a positive note there are overhead photos so you can see the outline of the building; the footings have been poured for the wellness center

Our concern is the large number of change orders due mainly to the site conditions. We found ledge where the electrical conduits were supposed to go---that has been changed. We have a full set of sub bids which are now being analyzed. We anticipate having the maximum price by the second or third week of December.

V. Fire Station

JM: nothing much new. The foundation is in and we are still working on the sidewalk ; getting some of the easements are a challenge. We are working with the neighbors; the project is on schedule.

VI. There were no comments on the revised ALG Charter and Ground Rules

VII. Budget calendar

John will develop a budget calendar. Everything will change because of the move of ATM to May; things will move approximately two months later; budgets have to be ready 60 days before the start of ATM. The budget workshops with the finance committee will likely be in March. The BoS will have extra time to help develop the budget and since it will be later it's hoped that there will be more information (especially from the state)

Peter: the delay will help the schools as well; we will have to coordinate with Boxboro

VIII. Agenda

There was a discussion on the date for the next meeting. Since budgets would not be ready there was a concern that the 12/10 meeting was not needed. There was a strong opinion for the need for a meeting in December and the 17th was necessary.

Christie said that the FC was nearly finished with their POV and she felt strongly that there needed to be a full discussion on the proposal to not have any tax increase for the coming FY.

Marie asked that the ALG meetings not happen the same day as there is a school committee meeting in the evening

Bart: the proposal is to have the ALG the second Thursday of the month. This met with agreement but Marie noted that at times there might need to be two meetings in a single month.

It was agreed to meet on 12/10 and if the meeting was not needed, meet on 1/14

Adjourned at 9:05

Ann Chang