

Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes
September 10, 2024
7:30 PM

Present: Jason Cole (Chair), Scott Sullivan (Vice Chair), Steve Noone, Roland Bourdon, Corinne Hogseth, Dave Wellinghoff (remote), Christi Andersen, Allison Jones, Greg Jarboe (remote) and Gang Chen

Mr. Cole called the meeting to order.

1. Citizen's Concerns

None

2. Task Force Vs Focus Group

Change in title after Mr. David Martin, Select Board Liaison, informed FinCom it doesn't have authority to appoint people to a Committee. FinCom would have to ask the Select Board to create a Committee and ultimately the Select Board could edit that charge. Can effectively get same results with a Focus Group instead and receive applications/applicants for this Focus Group.

Purpose of Listening sessions - Sessions are with the whole FinCom. These sessions are wide open, all are welcome to attend.

Purpose of Focus Group - Collective group, possibly 8-10 participants with a set of questions where information is brought back to FinCom. People can be invited by FinCom to be part of the Focus Group.

Mr. Noone discussed going to COA, PTO, EDC, etc... members and inviting them to attend a Focus Group session; can invite anyone to attend. Discussion ensued regarding the option of FinCom members also attending such Committee meetings with the FinCom questions to gather information and answers to their questions.

FinCom can invite people to the Focus Group meetings, versus people just showing up. It is still a public meeting.

Mr. Chen commented the similarities with the Elementary Budget Task Force.

Mr. Cole offered the other option of creating a short-term Subcommittee of the Select Board. Discussion ensued. Voted unanimously to create the Focus Group v. Subcommittee. Roll call vote, 10-0-0.

Mr. Noone asked how to solicit interest. Ms. Andersen offered to confirm how to do this legally.

Ms. Andersen reiterated: Listening sessions - everyone is welcome, everyone should come, then have the smaller Focus Group.

Mr. Martin spoke about the differences between the Focus Group and Listening Sessions.

Focus Group: Interaction among group members, going back-and-forth among ideas. Listening sessions: Like a hearing. People come, say what is important to them. This is unsolicited. How much back-and-forth is managed by FinCom.

Mr. Martin stated the FinCom can pick the people on the Focus Group. They will meet together at FinCom meetings. FinCom can have criteria, use it as a judgment factor in determining the people chosen for the Focus Group.

Ms. Andersen will be on the next FinCom's Agenda to continue with the Focus Group discussion. Mr. Cole requested Ms. Andersen to have a draft ready for review that could be placed on the Town website, Municipal Monthly, etc. informing the community of this Focus Group.

3. Point of View (POV)

Mr. Cole presented the changes he made from the last meeting. Minimal changes were made to better clarify the message.

Overall message, the 50.03% voted for the Override, extremely tight margin.

On the Longer-Term slide, Mr. Noone commented that the town has stayed within Prop 2 1/2 from 2006 to 2024, but to the detriment of the upkeep and maintenance of municipal buildings.

On the Recommendations slide:

- Fund OPEB and Middlesex retirement as quickly as possible
- Do everything possible to smooth out tax increases
- Postpone/delay Debt Exclusions. Mr. Cole commented that the Jr and Sr. High School borrowing does fall off end of FY25 and not FY28 as previously understood. Mr. Cole does not recommend overrides two (2) years in a row.
- New Comprehensive Plan - for example, look at revenue side
- Reiterate the Reserve Policy
- Plan for future expenses now instead of paying as they crop up

Mr. Jarboe made motion to approve the POV, Mr. Bourdon seconded with stipulation Chair will attempt to make Appendix A more readable. Passed unanimously. 10-0-0. Roll call vote.

Next steps: FinCom will ask to be invited to various Town Committees to present the POV; preferably two (2) FinCom members to present together.

Mr. Cole and Mr. Sullivan will be presenting to Select Board and Mr. Cole and Ms. Andersen will be presenting to the School Committee.

4. ALG Review

Mr. Cole and Mr. Sullivan attended the September 4th ALG meeting. Mr. Cole summarized what was discussed at that meeting.

ALG is a consensus-driven organization and there may be disagreement regarding debt exclusion for the proposed new DPW facility. Could this be the first ever ALG that can not come to consensus.

A debt exclusion requires a 2/3 vote. Mr. Cole understands an override decision must be made by an October ALG meeting; Mr. Noone commented that was when Town Meeting, though, was in April. But, the longer one waits, the shorter time to prove points. Mr. Cole inquired should Thanksgiving time be the trip wire?

All members agreed this is the 3rd FinCom meeting where members are not supporting the new DPW building. Mr. Cole asked Ms. Fleckner and Mr. Martin to confirm if they understand this point. Both confirmed.

Mr. Martin - if voted for DPW facility, could be FY28. Mr. Cole commented back could be FY27 or even FY26.

Mr. Cole commented that September 26th is an important meeting that FinCom members should make every effort to attend. This is the first DPW Working group meeting. Would also ask Mr. Mangiaratti for a detailed meeting on the DPW Facility design with FinCom.

5. Finance Committee Business

Minutes:
None

Liaison Reports:

School Committee - Ms. Andersen reported out. Considering leasing land to TowerCo, cell tower company. Concern about health risks of cell towers, will be looked into further.

Water District - Ms. Jones reported out. Discussed the MWRA, drafting an IMA, a study of joining the MWRA. Hiring StanTec to conduct this study.

Next meeting Date:

September 24, 2024 - 7:30pm
October 8th and 22nd - 8:00pm
November 5th - 7:30pm
November 19th - 7:30pm

Mr. Chen made motion to adjourn, Mr. Bourdon seconded. Passed unanimously, 10-0-0. 8:58pm.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

Point of View