

Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

August 27, 2024

7:30 PM

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

Mr Cole called the meeting to order.

1. Citizen's Concerns

Mr. David Martin: In July Select Board voted to support a new DPW facility. At last FinCom meeting, POV presented no excluded debt until FY29. Though POV doesn't explicitly mention the DPW, Mr. Martin high-lighted the health and safety issues with the current facility, it is over 55 years old. It is not prudent to wait until inflation or other factors change.

2. Cost Cutting Task Force

Christi Andersen brought a charge to the Finance Committee, recommending the creation of a Cost Cutting Task Force.

3 Main Charges of the Task Force:

- Identity short-, medium- and long-term cost cutting measures
- Tax impact and affordability
- Present results

Discussion ensued regarding who to present the report/information to. Point taken: Do not build expectations if can not deliver on promises.

Deliverables:

Slide show presentation

Written report documenting community input

Task Force website

Make-up of the Committee:

As discussed at last meeting: 1 School Committee member, 1 Select Board member, 2 FinCom members, 1 Town staff members, 1 School staff member, 2 Renters, 2 Parents, 2 Retirees, 2 Business Owners. All agreed the Chair of this Task Force will be a FinCom member

Simple majority was discussed. If tie, Chair breaks the tie by voting. Half plus one of the currently appointed members. Mr. David Martin will supply the exact language that was given to them from Town Counsel.

Discussion ensued of the various groups listed above:

Town and School Members - Should Town and School members be voting members? No, may cause a conflict of interest. Additional discussion ensued about whether or not having Town and School members on the Committee. Would any employee be acceptable for example, Town Manager and Superintendent; Jason recommends Town Manager and Superintendent appoint each person. Members must be Acton tax payers. Mr. Noone suggests the Town Manager and Superintendent give FinCom a few names and FinCom picks from that list.

Mr. Nolde suggested we take another approach of: "Anyone interested in being a member of this Committee, please let us know." At this time, we'll continue with the grouping, but anyone can apply.

2 Renters - These 2 positions are part of another grouping. For example, a parent who rents

2 Parents - Grade 12 and younger. Preferred spread out between teenager and elementary school, that will be a FinCom appointment decision

2 Retirees - Discussion ensued about Retirees versus Seniors. Changed to Seniors, age 60+

2 Business Owners - don't have to live in Acton, retail or commercial space

2 Citizens-at-large

14 members, one vote per member

Schedule of Meetings:

October - 2 meetings, listening sessions. 2nd meeting process feedback from initial listening session

November - 1 meeting

December - 1 meeting

Continued meetings between January through May

2 meetings in May - 1 of those debrief after Town Meeting

2 meetings in June, report no later than June 30, 2025

Goal: Finalize a report in May to be presented to Select Board and FinCom in June
Any presentation to School Committee? Mr. Cole recommends the presentation goes to FinCom, then FinCom decides whether or not it goes to Select Board or School Committee.

Mr. Bourdon recommended to have language that extends this Task Force as needed. Mr. Cole suggests to include sunset language, when the report is finalized.

Recommend to have meetings on weekend mornings. A concern was discussed about possibly excluding people due to religious reasons. A question if a person is able to attend a Saturday/weekend will be asked.

Ms. Fleckner will ask if Room 204 could be available for these meetings, if they're conducted on Saturdays. Employee representative will have a fob.

Ms. Andersen discussed hybrid meeting allowed, but first 2 meetings must be in-person. The public will be allowed to listen in.

Mr. Jarboe suggested the Acton TV space may be available, but Ms. Andersen commented it is not on the Shuttle route hence why it isn't being pursued.

Discussion ensued about listening sessions. Ms. Andersen commented the goal is to have 4 listening sessions. Mr. Cole suggested a survey be conducted in connection with the listening sessions.

Discussion ensued about meeting Open Meeting Law (OML) requirements.

Mr. Martin offered to find out if the Select Board needs to approve the creation of this Task Force.

Mr. Jarboe suggested a goal should be a proportional representation when conducting surveys.

Ms. Fleckner commented the Schools created an Elementary Budget Task Force. At the August 13th FinCom meeting there was discussion about calling this a Budget Task Force as well. Is the intention of still calling this group the "Cost Cutting Task Force"? Ms. Andersen confirmed yes.

3. Point of View (POV)

Mr. Cole presented changes from the last iteration that was presented at the August 13, 2024 FinCom meeting.

Mr. Cole high-lighted that on page 3 of the presentation, the cost of services is outstripping inflation. Mr. Cole shows a 1-year, 5-year and 10-year comparison grid.

Mr. Martin commented that the ALG chart shows debt falling off this year. He recommended FinCom confirm the excluded debt. Ms. Andersen looked up the March 25, 2024 ALG spreadsheet with the back-up tabs. Mr. Martin reiterated that it is shown on the first page/tab of the ALG spreadsheet. Mr. Cole will confirm when projects fall

off. Ms. Andersen commented that in the 2023 ALG the Jr./Sr. High School excluded debt falls off in FY29.

Discussion ensued about the use of the untaxed levy capacity. This presentation supports only use for surprises or as a bridge to a new structural model. Ms. Andersen reminded the ALG model of \$400k/year use in addition to Free Cash for upcoming fiscal years.

Members spent much time discussing about achieving fiscal sustainability.

Additional debt exclusions are not affordable.

Mr. Cole recommends reserves to be maintained at 3%. Reserves earmarked for a specific purpose may increase the %, but should remain below the free cash policy ceiling of 5%.

This group would like to visit the possible use of Stabilization fund.

4. Finance Committee Business

Minutes:

None

Liaison Reports:

School Committee - Ms. Andersen reported out Task Force approved by the School committee.

Economic Development Committee - Mr. Jarboe reported out reviewing a Hazard Mitigation report in the town.

Select Board - Mr. Cole reported out:

- Habitat for All survey still open;
- 2 new FF/EMT's sworn in;
- Next DPW Committee meeting is Sept 26, room 204, plan is to bring a report to the next Town Meeting. Adam Nolde is on that Committee;
- ARPA deadline is end of year, FinCom will ask for a final recap in January;
- Presentation of FY26 budget process, 1/14, 1/15 and 1/21 a combo of these 3 dates;
- Revenue number estimation is \$1.7m, lower turn back than normal \$70k;
- Fire Truck ordered will take 4 years;
- Select Board spoke about ALG

Next Meeting Date:

Not announced

Mr. Chen moved to adjourn, Mr. Noone seconded. Passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 10:33pm

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

Point of View