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ALG Minutes June 27, 2013

Present: Bart Wendell, facilitator; Janet Adachi & Mike Gowing, BoS; Steve Noone & Pat Clifford, FC; Dennis Bruce & Kim McOsker, SC; Steve Ledoux, Steve Mills, Steve Barrett & Don Aicardi, staff.

Audience: Brian McMullen, asst. assessor; Dick Calandrella & Bob Ingram.

Extra Info: Agenda; ALG Charter & Ground Rules; March 28 minutes; suggested calendar for budget planning

I. Review of the ALG Charter & ground rules

Bart welcomed everyone to a new ALG year [the only new member is Dennis Bruce from the school committee---all the other members have served on the ALG before.] He explained that the first order of business was to agree the ALG ground rules & charter---which he described as a "living document." He noted that the ALG has great possibilities for doing good or doing damage. Most of the damage occurs outside of the actual meeting when members do not abide by the consensus that was developed within the group. "ALG is not a decision making body---there is no quorum of any board or committee---the purpose is to reach consensus: the best possible solution that is then taken back to the boards for agreement. ALG members are supposed to sell the agreement put it in a positive light. He stressed that members needed to be sure that they are not being "helpful" in September because the agreements made at the beginning of the session may not look so good in February.

Bart explained the reason for no substitution is because the process is ongoing and the conversation extends from one meeting to the next.

Mike asked who would be in charge of the spreadsheet since in the past it was a shared duty between the school s and town

Don said that this was his third cycle & when he first started John [Murray] helped a great deal in getting the information out---so the town took the lead role. Since then it has been a shared responsibility. Don said that he worked with Steve B & Brian McMullen to get the spreadsheet up to date & present it to the ALG. There is no need to divide the labor since there was already a cooperative arrangement in place.

The staff is aware that there will be substantive changes for FY 15 because of the regionalization---this will be an "enormous" task

Pat: We have to decide what we want to present and we need to have a discussion on this.

SN: The format [spreadsheet] has not changed for 10 years---it needs updating. The new region will make it different. The FC has been working on a long range plan on three-year cycles and we need to see how the [spreadsheet numbers] fit into the LRP. We just don't want to tweak the ALG plan. We really need to take a good look at it to see what it is we want to present.

Bart: Should that be an agenda for the next meeting? Should we split the responsibilities?

SB noted that it was natural for the members to want changes but he also noted that there were 1,084 numbers in the worksheets.

It was agreed to put a discussion of the spreadsheet & what it should show on the August 8th agenda.

Bart asked if there were any changes to the ground rules & charter

Pat wanted to know the process for getting things on the agenda

S. L: said he sends out an email to the group the week before asking for agenda items he adds any requests.

2. Minutes were approved

3. Update on FY 13 revenues & expenditures

SL: "We are in the process of finalizing the state numbers." Initially the Governor had \$300m for Chapter 90 [highway] funds. That's been cut in half and towns are scrambling---this will have an impact on FY15."

SB: For local revenues, FY 13 has been a good year---motor vehicle taxes are up; property tax collection is good---there are no large tax returns [from 61a; back taxes etc.]

"I have been watching all the economic indicators---things are turning around---sluggishly but still turning."

On the expense side it has been a tough winter; there has been a concerted effort by the Town Manager to curtail legal expenses & that money is needed to offset the commitments made at Town Meeting for the policed. We have under-budgeted for veterans but I think we will be turning back around \$100-\$150k.

Don: For FY 13 AB will turn back @\$280k which will have an E&D of \$1.5m rather than the \$1.9 expected; APS will turn back \$175k

Bart: Questions?

Mike: "What's the snow & ice overrun?"

SL: around \$192k

Kim: What changed with the legal fees?

SL: We have had no major litigations. I am the gate keeper & have encouraged staff to do their own research.

Don: State budget---right now the House numbers are lower than the Senate's. We are waiting to see what comes out of the conference committee.

4. Citizen's comments

Bob Ingram: 1. There are no microphones today 2. I think you need to send out the spreadsheet to the public for information and education. Very few know anything about it. 3. Minutes from March 28th, Feb 14 & 28th are not on the web.

Ann's answer: "I do not send the minutes to the clerk until they are approved but the ALG. This AM we approved March 28th. I do not have to power to put anything on the web---speak to the clerk."

Janet: "Do you mean that we should put out the spreadsheet during the year when we are working on it or just at Town Meeting? [Bob Ingram meant for Town Meeting.]

Mike: "We go through so many iterations that I have concerns that people will get stuck on the old numbers that we have changed and it will cause more problems than it will solve."

There were some suggestions about the LWV holding a budget meeting showing the meaning of each line.

Kim noted that the HIT will still have numbers for the budget: SL noted that OPEB will as well. (It turns out Boxboro also has an OPEB committee)

Pat said that she did not want to keep to the deadlines in the present schedule---both the analysis of the expenses and the LRP are too far into the season

SB: The calendar has been a useful tool to focus on certain strike points along the way...

Pat: The calendar was developed when Jon Chinitz was around and things need to be shifted

Bart: This will be an agenda item

Pat: We need to have space for the capital plan and the FC's LRP

SN: We need to look at capital---North Acton Fire Station, senior center....

Janet: It will be helpful to have the FC's representatives develop an alternative proposal.

Pat Clifford and Steve Noone will develop a schedule for the next meeting.

After some discussion of different vacation dates, it was decided to meet on Aug 8 at 7:30 AM

Adjourned at 8:25

Ann Chang