

Minutes – Acton Finance Committee

November 10, 2009, 7:30p.m.

Room 204

Town Hall

Pursuant to a notice duly posted with the Town Clerk and with a quorum of members present, the Acton Finance Committee convened at 7:30 p.m. on November 10, 2009 to review various matters.

Members present for the meeting: Herman Kabakoff, Chair, Mary Ann Ashton, Vice Chair, Bill Mullin, Clerk, Pat Clifford, Pat Easterly, Bob Evans, Steve Noone, Kent Sharp, Doug Tindal, Brandy Brandon, Associate Member and Karen Kucala, FinCom, Staff Liaison.

Chairman Herman Kabakoff called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

Public Participation

None.

Subsequent to Public Participation, Pat Clifford showed the plaque presented to the AB Regional High School designating it as a “Blue Ribbon School.” She noted it was only one of 42 public high schools nationwide to receive this honor. Members thanked her for bringing this to our attention, and noted that it was another piece of evidence that Acton is a well-run town.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Doug Tindal, seconded by Pat Clifford, to approve the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on October 13, 2009. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Mary Ann Ashton, seconded by Pat Clifford, to approve the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on October 27, 2009. The motion passed unanimously.

Cost Savings Subcommittee

Maryann Ashton, Steve Noone and Brandy Brandon, serving as the Cost-Savings Subcommittee, presented a report entitled “Preliminary Estimation of Cost-Savings Suggestions”. The report is a part of the process begun earlier this year to examine all potential cost savings ideas, including those generated from the citizenry. Subcommittee Chair Ashton emphasized that the report is truly preliminary, intended to consolidate the suggestions into a framework that is suitable for further detailed analysis. The subcommittee needs direction from the Finance Committee about how to proceed.

The report and its authors were universally praised by FinCom members. Much discussion followed about the next steps. Consensus was reached that: a) the labor/benefits suggestions would be carved out of the report, re-packaged into a cogent set of recommendations/options and shared with the operating entities who have statutory authority to negotiate labor and benefit contracts, b) the FinCom members should review all the cases in detail, c) 10 (or so) cases will be identified as high-potential at the FinCom’s meeting on December 8th and d) then, the Subcommittee would present its approved results to the Board of Selectmen and School Committees.

Left unresolved were details about ownership of the business cases subsequent to the presentation to the operating entities. This will need to be worked out.

Capping a long discussion were re-iterative comments of thanks and praise to Ms. Ashton and her subcommittee for the great work.

Report about Board of Selectmen's Meeting

Ms. Clifford reported about the recent Board of Selectmen's meeting. Highlights are:

1. Town Manager Steve Ledoux expressed his view that the deferral of 9C cuts from the Governor erases the need for a Special Town Meeting to adjust FY10 budgets.
2. During annual oversight meeting, the CPC reviewed 2010 timetable for applications and discussed the possibility of a deadline extension to accommodate the BOS recommendations.
3. EDC presented their renewed partnership with the Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce during their oversight hearing amplifying the voice of the business community in the Committees deliberations.

Guidance for ALG Representatives

Of note is that Selectman Berry requested an agenda item for the November 18 ALG meeting on the local option meals/hotel tax as a potential FY11 revenue component. In general, FinCom members simply wanted to hear more about the rationale for doing so. Mr. Noone asked Doug Tindal (who serves also on the Economic Development Committee) if he could ask the EDC to opine on the local options tax and Mr. Tindal agreed to do so

Point of View

Mr. Mullin submitted a series of questions about the now traditional FinCom Point of View with respect to the upcoming fiscal year budget. Distilled, the questions were 1) should we do a POV this year and 2) if yes, what should we say?

Save Mr. Brandon, who declined to comment, the committee universally opined that we should do a POV this year. Mr. Mullin asked that any committee members who wished to provide input, to please send it to him. He expects a draft to be available at the next meeting.

Committee Reports

- Health Insurance Trust. Mr. Evans reported that he has received a draft audit report, showing a small operating loss for the last year, amply covered by investment income.
- A/B Regional School Committee. Ms. Clifford summarized; 1) the administration averred that FY10 numbers from the state are “aggravatingly vague”, 2) regional transportation aid was the main target area for cuts, and 3) the SC voted to investigate the revenue potential of corporate sponsorships.
- Community Preservation Committee. Mr. Noone reported that the submission deadline was yesterday and requests were submitted totaling slightly over \$1mm.
- Wastewater Advisory Neighborhood Task Force. Mr. Sharp reported that the committee continues to meet bi-weekly and is still working on high level issues.

- Minuteman Tech. Ms. Ashton reported that the Minuteman Tech representative Dore Hunter and the administration would like to visit the FinCom sooner than January.

Other Issues

None.

Adjourned

Mr. Sharp moved to adjourn (seconded by Ms. Clifford) and the meeting was adjourned sometime around 10:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by William C. Mullin, Clerk.