

ALG Minutes March 9, 2017

Present: Peter Ashton, facilitator; Paul Murphy & Amy Krishnamurthy, SC; Janet Adachi & Peter Berry, BoS; Margaret Busse & Doug Tindal, FC; Steve Ledoux, Glenn Brand Marie Altieri & Steve Barrett, Staff

Audience: Mark Hald & Clare Jeannotte, staff; Bonnie Lobel, Charlie Kadlec.

Extra Info: Town of Acton spreadsheet, ready for warrant

Minutes: accepted after corrections

2. Updates of FY17 Revenues and expenditures

SL: Not much. We do have a deficit of @\$60K in ice and snow account. Just before the last storm we replenished the salt.

Marie: everything seems to be on track

3. Reports on from boards on consensus reached on Feb. 16

Margaret: I was not at ALG on the 16th. The position of the FC is strongly opposed to taking the \$150K from the levy. We think you should take it from reserves.

Both the school committee and the selectmen agreed with the decision of the 16th. Margaret said the finance committee voted 5 to 3 to take the money from the reserves rather than the levy.

Peter Berry reminded Margaret that the Fin Com had set limits on the use of the reserves and the selectmen and school committee had tried to honor that limit.

Margaret said that the fin com would like to have the use of reserves limited but still lowering the amount. The real object was to have both entities live with their budgets while giving money back to the taxpayers.

Amy: the school committee accepted the compromise and will take another \$200k from E&D

Peter A: we are taken aback since we thought that all boards agreed.

Marie: it is the policy of the regional school to not take a position on Acton's tax levy so they did not take a position on the selectmen's use of the levy

Both the selectmen and the school committee members noted that there was not the time to go back to their boards before the warrant for town meeting had to go to the printer on 3/14 and do the changes suggested by the FinCom. All agreed that the ALG representatives would have to resolve the issue today without going back to their boards

Steve Ledoux came up with a compromise: take half of the \$160K shortfall from the levy and the other half from reserves. He added that if the \$80K was necessary to take from the tax levy there would be a

tax increase of about 3.9%. However, if the \$80K from the levy might not be necessary; actual levy use has historically been less than the projected use

ALG members agreed to this compromise. The spreadsheet will be revised to reflect this change.

Doug noted that he thought in an \$80m budget the money could be found.

4. Review of spreadsheet

SB: in the out years we have put in a 3.5% spending increase; Minuteman at \$100k increase; the excess tax levy will not be used. The tax rate is not set until December.

Marie: the three year projection has 3.7% for the region and 3.6% for minuteman. There are provisions in the regional agreement that will make changes in the assessment.

Clare: In FY 19 there will be a shift of \$425K

Peter A: the \$425K can be split between FY20 and FY21 then there is the enrollment

Marie: The Acton share of the regionalization savings will go from 80/20 to 60/40 and then to a flat \$425k.

SB: In FY 19 & 20 we can capture the tax levy capacity.

Doug: I think we should go out to FY20 and put in the numbers we know including the school shift.

Margaret: we also need to include the actuals

Marie: planning is not far enough along to put in actual numbers.

Paul said he was willing to work with Doug on getting the numbers for the planned future AB expenses

Janet: I understand Doug's concerns and agree on the need for the long term view but also understand current uncertainty about capital numbers. Perhaps we can agree that future ALG's and Town Meeting warrants will have to account for the numbers as they get pinned down from the capital improvement committee.

Margaret: its wise to go first for the school issues, see what the state will give and then try to build the budgets from that.

Doug: we are looking at major numbers here. We know it will not be zero. Lots of the schools and fire stations are at the end of their useful lives. Its best to work from knowledge but all of this will over shadow all our economic position.

Glenn: the work is ongoing. We will continue to get clarity around the building program. We will go for the design money at a fall town meeting.

Paul: I do hear Doug but there are a lot of projects now that need to be addressed.

It was decided that when the ALG reconvenes the out years will have different scenarios based on the reports from the capital planning committee and the decisions about the school projects

5. Public input

Charlie: I suggest to the FC that it is their prerogative under in town by laws to do a long range plan and present years going out as far as you wish at ATM. It should be the FC's assessment of the future.

I suggest that 4% is too much regardless of the consensus of ALG. Why are we absorbing these numbers when we have \$9m in reserves?

I'm considering offering an amendment at ATM about how the budget is funded (I hope some will support) we replenish at the rate of \$1m/year. The projected tax increase is far too high. Inflation is almost zero. The town is getting 2.5% plus new growth which makes it 3-5% increase every year. People are not getting those kinds of increases. I'm sorry to see the increase in taxes.

Bonnie Lobel: I'm very new at this and I see we have a reserve of \$9m that should be used to reduce the tax burden. I thank Doug and Margaret for trying to reduce the tax rate.

Marie: I commend them both for the forums at the COA. The schools will do a presentation at the senior at the COA

Peter B: the 3.2% has the minuteman tech costs added and we also have the new senior center costs.

Bonnie: I'm upset that we are not spending a lot of money on seniors. I noticed that only 40 Acton seniors get taxes breaks. In Sudbury they have lots more.

Marie: Thank you for your comments. I want to make sure that you know that the schools will be holding forums and doing a presentation about the building project for the CoA at the senior center

Meeting adjourned at 8:30

Next meeting TBD

Ann Chang