

Finance Committee Meeting
March 13, 2014
Minutes

Members present were Theresa M Manganelli, Jonathan R. Eaton, Bernard P. Nally, William J. Wallace, Jordan Weiner, Richard K. Hayden, Victoria L. Ellsworth.

Members excused: Robert P. Palmer

Also present: Mike Morris, Town Accountant, Kendra Amaral, Assistant Town Manager, Jeffery Hull, Town Manager

PRESENT IN INTEREST: Jeffery Hull, Town Manager, Kendra Amaral, Assistant Town Manager, Michael Morris – Town Accountant

Mr. Doherty – The Committee has been looking for information on spending of \$150,000 for the study for buildings (Article 10).

Mr. Hull – When the budget was prepared, the Whitfield School was not intended to be demolished. The town does not have a plan to refer to regarding what the next priority is as far as building needs goes. He explained he is looking to have a more comprehensive approach to the facilities which will look at what is needed for space and look at how to meet those needs in the future. Example include the Public Safety Building in which the departments outgrew as soon as they moved in. This master plan would look at these issues. It is advisable to have someone with the expertise to look at these buildings and department needs. The budget for it is a best estimate not an actual quote.

Ms. Manganelli – Does not believe this is the right time to spend money for the study. She is concerned it will sit on the shelf unused once completed. Mr. Hull - Responded that he clearly has the sense the residents do not want to have any new buildings constructed. We should start the plan now to have it when it is needed down the road. Estimated costs may not be right on but something will be in place to guide the decisions.

Mr. Hayden – Asked if this would be a high level plan. Mr. Hull – Explained that the Master Plan Committee was formed to look at the overall development of the town, not to address facilities.

Mr. Eaton – Asked if this something that should be out-sourced or can it be done by George Hooper. Ms. Amaral –Explained that architects are trained to understand the spatial needs of operations, for example if more employee's need to be hired how much square footage would be needed to house these people.

Mr. Wallace – Asked if this is the right time to do this study. Mr. Hull – This is not a plan you create when you need a building.

Ms. Manganelli - We have plans that were done in the past, then when the time comes they are outdated and need to have another plan done.

Ms. Ellsworth – Believes the town does not need to spend the money now, when we can convene some kind of committee. Recommends starting with a low cost strategic plan.

Mr. Doherty – Asked why this study will take 2 years to complete. Mr. Hull – Explained it could be a year to 18 months. The staff have had conversations internally. We know the School Department has facility needs, Police Department has outgrown its space, the Town Hall is lacking, there is need for a Fire substation, etc. This study will help us sort through the various needs and help develop the priority.

Mr. Hull – Explained how the Town of Needham does this every 10 years. This will be a strategic space plan, and would not be about designing buildings. The Whitfield School is an example of why buildings get in the shape they are in; because there was no strategic plan on what they would be used for.

Mr. Doherty – Asked why not go to the department heads and let them say what is needed and the reasons for the need.

Mr. Weiner – Asked if there is the plan to build a building in the next 2-3 years, or is it further out. If the town plans on building 2-3 years from now, then yes this plan should be done now. If it is 5-7 years than it should be put off for 2-3 years. Mr. Hull – Explained his vision for the future of buildings for the town. Discussion on the impact on taxes. He does not expect any construction in the next few years.

Mr. Nally – One upside to having an outside consultant, timing wise may be an issue, but would agree with this plan.

Mr. Wallace - Appreciates Jeff, Kendra and Mike for taking the time to talk to the committee on this subject.

Mr. Hull – Advisable to have this meeting. He respects the Committee's decision and understands where they are coming from on this. He will give it some thought to withdrawing the request.

Mr. Doherty – Noted the administration budget increase on legal fees were going to be reviewed. Ask what the outcome was. Mr. Hull – He is looking for \$325,000 in the FY15 budget. The FY14 budget is \$267,000 including water. \$300,000 is workable. We make sure we are only using services when we need to and staff go through the Town Manager first.

Mr. Wallace – Asked Mr. Morris to review 5-10 years of spending, determine what the percentage increase was and was it reasonable. Mr. Morris – At one point legal services were well over \$200,000 but then it decreased until last year. Discussion on the retainer agreement.

Mr. Morris – Explained the new process for assessment from Essex Aggie. Mr. Doherty – Asked if we need an agreement for Shawsheen Tech. That remains with Department of Education. They determine the rate per student including capital, and excluding transportation. Base on what we know now, the Essex Aggie cost will be \$121,982. It was originally projected at \$87,872 questions of whether Wilmington has 6 students verses 7 students attending. It is recommended to increase the appropriation so when things are figured out, it will be covered. Mr. Doherty – Asked if Mr. Morris can find out the cutoff

date. Mr. Morris – Explained he will not be able to get it until the end of next week. Will need to adjust revenue when the finance committee handbook comes out.

Other Business:

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Wallace, seconded by Jordan Wiener and by the affirmative vote of all, it was.

VOTED: That the Finance Committee adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05p.m., next meeting of the Finance Committee is scheduled town meeting Tuesday March 20, 2014

Respectfully submitted,

Recording secretary