

Warrant Committee FY07 Meeting Minutes
October 11, 2006
7:30 p.m. CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL
COMMUNITY ROOM

Handouts: Comparison of Operating Budgets FY98-07
Draft of potential warrant articles for STM

Other Attendees: Treasurer Carman, Town Administrator Younger, and Town Accountant Hagg.

Members Absent: Members Tillotson, Christensen, and Curtis

Meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

Minutes of September 27, 2006 were accepted with changes. BOS Chair Solomon abstained since he was not present at that meeting.

NOVEMBER 13 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

New Chapter 90, new one time funds \$148,387 will be voted. Peter Castanino feels that these funds should be used for sidewalk work. This is acceptable by the State Highway Department. This is one time only funding. **Motion by Member Heigham that we appropriate the funds as recommended, Oates seconded. All in favor except Hofmann.**

New Chapter 70 State Aid has been received under our Cherry Sheet amounting to approximately \$134K. Chair Jones discussed our options of either not using the funds, voting the split that has been agreed to by the School and Town Administration, or any other split. School Chair Gibson stated that she is in favor of using the funds for operating budgets. The change in the formula by the state resulted in a formula change that increased our funds. On the other hand the state budget is not currently healthy and is currently facing a \$550M deficit per Member Widmer. Additional Chapter 70 state aid is dependent upon the availability of funds in the state budget. Member Doblin was in favor of using those funds for the school department. Member Widmer stated that as we enter FY08 there continues to be a gap that needs to be bridged and building up the operating budget this year will in fact increase the gap that will be needed to maintain level services. Member Allison affirmed that one time funds should be used on non recurring expenses.

The school funding will be used to fund a second grade teacher at the Burbank school. During the summer 71 students moved into the school district and 13 of these were in the Burbank 2nd grade. Also a Middle School Librarian is very necessary. Member Oates asked about the timing constraints for using the monies. The second grade teacher has been hired but the Middle School librarian has not yet been hired. Member Hofmann is

in favor of saving the funds. Member Callanan stressed that we may never get back to the way that things used to be and we must adjust budgets to this new reality. She is in favor of spending these for one time expenses. Member Brusch feels that the 2nd grade teacher is very important to deal with. She is not in favor of spending just because the revenues are coming in higher than expected. BOS Chair Solomon does not feel that this is a spending spree, only reinstating services that were cut. He would like to see the people in town receiving the best possible services in the current fiscal year and deal with next year when the time arrives. Chair Jones stated that Chapter 70 is not one time funds but a continuing stream of revenues. We did not have the final figure of Town Meeting but now that we do, we it is time to build it into the budget. Member Paolillo also feels that we should hold off on using these funds and let the monies flow to free cash. Member Doblin is in favor of using the funds for the 2nd grade teacher. Member Brusch stated that the town would not have had to cut their budget to keep the school whole last May if these funds had been assured. Town was forced to delete a police officer and this should be restored.

Motion by Member Heigham to use \$50,000 towards the 2nd grade teacher.

Hofmann seconded. Again School Chair Gibson stressed that the purpose of this additional Chapter 70 funds was to maintain education. This was passed unanimously.

Younger at this point gave his presentation and explanation about the current lack of staffing at the Police Department. The turnover in that department has been dramatic between transfers and retirements. We currently have 46 uniformed officers budgeted, 3 are out on injury and two more retirements are expected next summer. There is nine months between the time of hiring at the police academy to deployment. We have not had any response when we attempted to recruit transfers from other communities.

Cushing Square has been an ongoing project with the Planning Department. Professional services have been used to push this project forward.

MIS small capital was reduced by \$5K and a new project that was identified today will eat up this new appropriation.

The sidewalk account has been decimated and the BOS has asked for some restoration of these funds.

Motion by Member Brusch that the Warrant Committee supports the split that was proposed by Town Administrator Tom Younger and Superintendent of Schools Peter Holland and that the only salary positions would be a police officer for the town and the 2nd grade teacher for the school department. The other funds should only be used for one time expenses. It is understood that this can only be a recommendation for the school department. This was agreed to unanimously.

This is a request by the Fire department for \$29,900 to replace a 1999 Tahoe that was destroyed in an accident. We will await further information.

US Geological Survey continuation would be \$21,330 (\$7,110) split between the three communities of Arlington, Belmont, and Cambridge. Chair Jones stated that we should wait to see the proposed source of funds.

The Conservation Commission is requesting a Revolving fund for wetland protection fees. Member Allison stated that taking those revenues out of the regular stream of receipts takes those funds out of the scrutiny of the BOS and WC. Member Bruschi stated that the training fees for Conservation must be included in the operating budget. As Chair Jones stated, it appears that this WC is not in favor of this.

Member Oates stated that STMs should be used only for special needs, not ongoing business items that should be put off until the Annual Meeting. It was hoped that the proceeds from the sale of Woodfall Rod would be on this STM but the agreement with the Belmont Country Club has not yet been signed by the Club. BOS Chair Solomon stated that several items on the agenda could be postponed.

The Belmont Municipal Light Advisory Board has a number of members with a great deal of expertise in this field. The BOS does not have this same expertise. This advisory Board has done a lot of work for the BOS and this Board and several members of the BOS feel that this board should be either elected by the community or appointed by the BOS. BOS Member Firenze not favor of this but the other members are in favor of this change. BOS Chair feels that this could wait until April but the Advisory Board would like it to be voted on as soon as possible. It is understood that this would have to be ratified by the state legislature. Member Widmer is not in favor of this and feels that this bypasses the democratic process. He feels that the Light Advisory Board should be presenting this to the WC. We can request their presence at the 10/25 meeting along with the health insurance discussion. Member Allison feels that allowing for an independent board with a vested interest in the continuation of a department into the future in this time of energy issues is something that should be carefully considered. BOS Chair will contact Mr. Brown to request that they come to the WC for a presentation.

Motion by Member Widmer that this be removed from the November STM. This was voted unanimously.

Chapter 77 of the Acts of 2005 will be removed from the STM agenda.

Next meetings will be scheduled for 10/25, 11/1 (large group), 11/8 (tentative), and 11/15, 11/29 and 12/6.

Motion to adjourn at 9:05 p.m. by Member Heigham.