

WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES SEPTEMBER 22, 2004

Handout(s) distributed tonight:

1. *Warrant Committee Roster*
2. *Subcommittee Assignments Listing*

Members absent: Linda Oates, Mark Paolillo, Selectman Paul Solomon, and Scott Stratford (John Bowe attended)

Also present: Town Administrator Mel Kleckner, Assistant Town Administrator Joyce Munro, School Director of Finance and Administration Dr. Gerry Missal, Acting Town Treasurer Daniela Boccia, and Town Accountant Barbara Hagg

Chairman Widmer called the meeting to order at 7:38 PM. He recognized Daniela Boccia as the Acting Town Treasurer. He added that Mark Paolillo has been appointed to fill the Warrant Committee vacancy.

Acceptance of Minutes

The Committee discussed the minutes of the September 8, 2004 meeting.

- *Member Hofmann made a motion, Member Hobbs seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to accept the minutes as amended of the September 8, 2004 meeting.*
- *Member Heigham abstained from said vote.*

Chairman Widmer asked the members of the Warrant Committee for a representative to the Vision 21 Committee. Member Hofmann was the liaison for the past three years. Member Kobus does not see why a member has to be at every weekly Vision meeting. If there is an issue for the Warrant Committee to respond, the Vision Committee can come to the Warrant Committee and present the topic.

Member Tillotson has been attending the Housing Trust Committee meetings, and he questions that a permanent Warrant Committee member liaison is not necessary to this Committee either. Member Bruschi believes, initially, the Board of Selectmen requested the Warrant Committee to put a liaison on the Housing Trust Committee.

Member White is concerned with spreading ourselves too thin since we are asking the Warrant Committee Subcommittees to be meeting with Department Heads. Chairman Widmer will review this issue with others in time for the next Warrant Committee meeting.

FY06 Budget Process and Schedule

Town Administrator Kleckner gave a presentation regarding an early look at the FY06 Budget and a broad view of Town services. The theme is “Building a Foundation for Excellence” documenting the needs for the FY06 Budget. The overriding issue is providing excellent public services in an environment with limited revenues, unfunded state/federal mandates, heightened security, the increasing age of municipal infrastructure, high expectations from our citizenry, and a demanding process of local governance. The structural gap has at least a 2% annual growth. The Town needs to build an additional revenue stream. Increased revenues would support staffing, equipment, capital projects, and maintenance/support services.

Over the next three Board of Selectmen sessions, we will devote one hour at each meeting do discuss these issues. Town Administrator Kleckner requested Warrant Committee Subcommittee members attend those Board of Selectmen meetings. He is proposing that, at some point, there be a presentation on the Town’s needs at the Special Town Meeting. Town Administrator Kleckner will be asking the Board of Selectmen around 12/1 to make a decision on whether we should go for an override. At the end of this week, Town Administrator Kleckner said he would get reports out to the Warrant Committee regarding the departments budget overview.

Come to the Board of Selectmen meeting at 8:30 PM on:

9/27 General Government and Human Services

10/18 Culture & Recreation

10/25 or 11/1 Public Services

Chairman Widmer added the Warrant Committee Subcommittees would be presenting their reports at the 10/13 (Public Safety, Library, COA, Public Works), 10/27, and 11/10 Warrant Committee meetings. He mentioned that Subcommittees should be prioritizing the “laundry list” of items with each of the departments.

The Pro Forma Group will be meeting again on 10/7 and 10/21. By the end of October, the Group hopes to have some analysis of “the Gap,” in case there is no override.

Assistant Town Administrator Munro informed the Committee about a Reserve Fund transfer request regarding the Town Hall portion of the new School Administration Building and Homer Building phone system. It will be an advantage to the Town for the Town Hall to participate in this new phone system. School Technology Director Dr. Lee McCanne, who is working on this project, broke out the cost of the project for the Town Hall in a memo previously distributed. The transfer request is for \$12,600. Vice Chair Jones would like more of a discussion on the savings down the road when Dr. McCanne, Joanna Hilgenberg, and Assistant Town Administrator Munro come to discuss this transfer at the 10/13 meeting (around 8:00 PM).

Summer Task Force Reports

Elected versus Appointed Treasurer

Member Fitzgerald has broken down the pros/cons of the current system versus the appointed system. It boils down to which process creates the least financial risk for the Town. With a 3:1 Summer Task Force Committee vote, an appointed person in conjunction with an improved auditing process would be the most feasible solution. Member Heigham added if we are going to do it, it has to come before the Special Town Meeting in December, and then an Annual Town Election vote. Town Administrator Kleckner reviewed the process of having the appointed position on the same ballot as the elected position.

Member Hofmann does not want to rush this issue or confuse the voters with having both issues on the same ballot. Member Brush sees the problem of possible confusion with this election, but believes we are better off doing it this way. We are not even sure the Board of Selectmen intend to put it on the Warrant.

Member White added that we have as much information as we will have on this topic. One option is to make a Warrant Committee recommendation to the Board of Selectmen. Chairman Widmer took an informal vote:

- *Ten Warrant Committee members **recommend** to the Board of Selectmen putting an Article on the Warrant creating an appointment for the Town Treasurer's position.*
- *Three Warrant Committee members are **opposed to recommending** to the Board of Selectmen putting an Article on the Warrant.*

Building Services

The Task Force is mid-way through the process. The three administrators (Town Administrator Kleckner, School Superintendent Dr. Holland, and Library Director Maureen Connors) have met and discussed this issue. Our goal for the next few weeks is to work on a Town Building Services model. The Town's Building Services is very understaffed, and something needs to be done to correct this issue. There is also a new construction law (an unfunded mandate) that affects Town projects. The Permanent Building Committee, which Member Bruschi is also a member of, is also involved with the new law.

Town Administrator Kleckner added there were lines of communication were opened up for the three administrators. There was, by no means, a rejection of cooperation at some level. Everyone is still wanting to be part of the process knowing that weaknesses need to be addressed, although the consolidation model is not fully shared by all the administrators.

Mr. Bowe asked what our peer towns do regarding building services. Town Administrator Kleckner responded that it is a "mixed bag." He added each of the administrators looked at one or two peer communities. There is not one model that fits all. Member Bruschi says we need to get to the bottom of determining why we are not consolidating, and that we are not consolidating, so we can move on with requests from additional Building Services staffing.

Computer Leasing

Member Tillotson spoke with two companies regarding leasing. Peter Quinn, the MA State CIO, is encouraging municipalities to look into leasing versus buying. Nashoba, Quincy, and Norwood school systems are currently leasing. Leasing does not make sense in all situations. Once we gather more information, we need to bring together the Town and Schools. The next steps are to get the third vendor in, digest the three reports, and ideally, have one to two vendors become involved and talk about a cost/benefit analysis. Chairman Widmer pointed out that the process here is many months to collect the information and give a presentation. This is extending beyond an FY06 issue.

Look at Town Manager

Member Heigham looked into the mechanics of this issue. There are two procedural steps. First, the Town Manager is not a creature of the general laws, because it takes a special act of the State Legislature. Secondly, when you present your act to the Legislature, you should have already determined the powers given to the Town Manager. For example, do you let the Town Manager: appoint most of the Boards? appoint Department Heads? have exclusive authority in collective bargaining?

Member Doblin asked if there is anything in the laws that require a five-member Board of Selectmen in tandem with creating a Town Manager. Member Heigham noted it is more coincidence that this issue is occurring, not a requirement. The idea being that the Board is functioning as a Board of Directors.

Energy Savings

Member Fitzgerald said the ESCO Group voted to use Noresco as the company for the Town's building energy conservation project. It was primarily determined on the length of time the company has performed these projects.

Other

Chairman Widmer reminded the Committee of the upcoming meeting dates:

Warrant Committee

October 13

October 27

November 10

November 17

Special Town Meeting

November 29

December 1

Dr. Missal mentioned the High School Master Plan was presented to the School Committee earlier this week. He will distribute the handouts from that meeting to

Warrant Committee members. It could be presented again, if needed, at the Mega Meeting (which is currently unscheduled).

Member Heigham made a motion, and it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristina E. Frizzell

Recording Clerk