

**THE MINUTES
OF THE
WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING
MAY 21, 2003**

Chairman Widmer called the meeting to order at 7:42 PM.

Members absent: W. Flewelling, P. Bruschi, L. Oates, and W. Hofmann

Also present: Town Administrator Mel Kleckner, Assistant Town Administrator Joyce Munro, Selectman Paul Solomon, and Selectman Anne Marie Mahoney

Handout(s) given out tonight:

1. *FY04 Budget Update to Warrant Committee distributed by Town Administrator Kleckner*

Acceptance of Minutes

The Committee discussed and the minutes of the May 14, 2003 meeting.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member Tillotson seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to accept the minutes as amended of May 14, 2003.*

Reserve Fund Transfer – Public Safety Communications

Chairman Widmer reviewed last week's Public Safety Communications Reserve Fund \$17K request with the Committee. Member Schafer asked the Public Safety Subcommittee whether they feel the overtime for FY04 is sufficient. Member McCormick mentioned the rule regarding having a full-time employee cover as overtime for a period of time is written into his or her contract, which is really limiting for the Town. Town Administrator Kleckner added that in this case, the individual had accumulated a lot of sick time over the years, and therefore was able to use it in this circumstance.

Member Kobus remarked that we really do not have a choice on this vote. She wants to understand this request process better, since the Town is obligated to pay the employees for time worked. Town Administrator Kleckner recommended approval of this request. Chairman Widmer reminded the Committee that a Reserve Fund transfer is for emergencies and unexpected occurrences.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member Hobbs seconded said motion and with 13 members present, the Committee unanimously voted to transfer*

\$17,000 to Public Safety Communications from the Warrant Committee Reserve Fund.

Other

The General Government Subcommittee met with the Town Clerk yesterday. She was not involved in the instigation of the handout, and when she discovered the “pink” handout, it was collected and put aside. She also pointed out there was an inaccuracy or a misunderstanding in a prior memo from Town Administrator Kleckner to the Board of Selectmen. The Town Clerk did listen and focus more on the basis of the Subcommittee’s point of view. They reiterated the 1% salary increase is not reflective of her performance, but it is the management pool average for salary increases. Ultimately, the Town Clerk understands the Warrant Committee will not change their position. She would like to have a presentation at Town Meeting as to how the Warrant Committee came up with their recommendation. It was Member Heigham’s intention to do this anyway. They did take Member Callanan’s comment from last week to consideration as well.

Chairman Widmer asked the Committee if they were comfortable with staying with the results of their previous vote results. The Committee agreed.

FY04 Budget Discussion

Town Administrator Kleckner and Assistant Town Administrator Munro presented an “FY04 Budget Update to Warrant Committee” (*Handout 1*). He reviewed the timeline in detail of the FY04 Budget process. Town Administrator Kleckner summarized the remaining issues: Minuteman assessment, fuel, technology management, and the details of the capital budget. He mentioned that Minuteman has changed their assessment formula, which will significantly affect some local communities. For the technology issue, one proposal the Town has been thinking about would be at most a \$100K price tag, where the Light Department would be participating in to some degree. This issue would include collaborating with the School Department and the hiring of an “Information Technology or Systems Manager” which is most of the \$100K cost.

Chairman Widmer discussed with the Board of Selectmen when the Warrant Committee should discuss the FY04 Capital Budget. The Warrant Committee will discuss both the full budget and the capital budget at their June 4th meeting.

Member McCormick asked if there was someone else in Town to be the Information Technology Manager instead of creating a position and going through a search. Town Administrator Kleckner responded no, and remarked this position is different from a Network Manager. This IT Manager position would include training, troubleshooting, and purchasing software. That individual would work with each department for their software solutions as well as Town-wide issues. Selectman Solomon recapped Information Technology Advisory Committee’s (ITAC) study and recommendations, and emphasized this position is needed in the Town.

Member Stratford suggested this could be filled internally for FY04 to allow time to build the projected \$100,000 annual cost into the budget for FY05. Chairman Widmer would like this position filled for FY04. Member Tillotson does not think a consultant, who would have only a 6, 12, or an 18-month plan, would have the best long-term interest for the Town. Also, the costs for a consultant would outweigh the short-term benefits for the Town.

Member Schafer spoke of Minuteman and their changed assessment formula. They have gone against what was written in their agreement. In a sense (“to be cynical”), we’ve been riding on the Chapter 70 money from other towns over the years, and now that is no longer the case. The Senate Budget has a little bit more money in it for the regional schools, but we do not know the Town’s portion yet. We are not that far from the \$160K the Town Administrator Kleckner had projected. Minuteman is saying this is what the State requires, however that overrides the Minuteman Agreement with Belmont. She thinks this is the way it will be going forward. Member Callanan said it was discussed “what if” Belmont does not send students, and the final word on that was that the Town would be violating State law. Only six communities are getting an increase from this assessment change, while ten communities are seeing a decrease. Their budget only needs 11 communities’ approval to pass, which Minuteman should have then.

Chairman Widmer would like to have the Warrant Committee discuss technology and any specific Subcommittee recommendations not already factored into the budget at the May 28th meeting. On June 4th, since the Board of Selectmen would have voted a final FY04 Budget on June 2nd, the Warrant Committee would take their final votes on the FY04 Budget. The Subcommittee’s first draft of their reports would be expected on May 30th. With the final votes on June 4th, the Subcommittees would then have about 24 hours to turn around their final reports.

When the Warrant Committee gets into the Subcommittees recommended changes, Vice Chairman White would like to plea the Committee stays away from the little things (under \$10K) because it will be a waste of time that evening. Chairman Widmer agrees with the sentiment, but is not sure on the dollar figure mentioned by Vice Chairman White. Some policy issues in the discussion may affect dollar amounts smaller than \$10K. Since there are a number of loose ends, Chairman Widmer asked the Subcommittees to go back and review their budgets.

The Committee discussed the Town-owned Vehicle Policy budget issues as well as the State’s House and Senate Budget figures that Town Administrator Kleckner should expect to assume for his final presentation to the Board of Selectmen on June 2.

Capital Spending Overview

This issue will be discussed at the June 4th meeting.

As a Warrant Committee, we need to discuss the two major articles on the Fire Stations and the Senior Center. What Chairman Widmer wants to talk about briefly are the timing and issues relating to these articles. For example, the Senior Center: should it be one floor or two floors? The question in his mind is how to do that and the timing between now and Town Meeting.

Member Curtis remarked that getting the numbers is the easy part, but the hard part is why you are going to build the building. Vice Chairman White would like the numbers to be provided and used as a base of the discussion. Member Heigham understood Barbara Miranda's Committee said the Senior Center should be a one-story building due to the small amount of parking. Member McCormick added that she remarked at the Library Director's meeting yesterday the Center should be one-story but should have the capacity to add a floor in the future.

Selectman Brownsberger said the biggest decisions in a building with the possibility of adding on to a building is the basement and location of the elevator shaft. The Council on Aging wants a basement for various reasons. This will help the decision in making a building that can grow.

Member Callanan said the decision the Library has made is a courageous decision. They are saying no to a new facility. As far as the Senior Center is concerned, she would be very interested as to the numbers that use the Senior Center. It is not a small number, and she realizes that more would come with a new building. She would also like to know ahead of time what the numbers of pledges are. Her major concern is the Senior Center, as a stand-alone without the Library, will not get enough votes. If the Library is not interested, are there any other parts of the community that would be willing to go in there that could necessitate a second story. Selectman Brownsberger answered that there is not enough interest currently.

Member McCormick wondered since the Warrant Committee is going to make a decision, if there are any organized groups on the other side of the issue that would want to be involved in the discussion of these two articles.

Chairman Widmer expects to have a final Warrant Committee recommendation vote at the June 11th meeting.

Member McCormick made a motion, and it voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:19 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristina E. Frizzell

Recording Clerk