

WARRANT COMMITTEE FY07 MEETING MINUTES
FINAL
MAY 9, 2007, 7:30 P.M.
CHENERY MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ROOM

Meeting was called to order at 7:33 by Chair Jones.

Present: Chair Jones; Members Bruschi, Callanan, Curtis, Doblin, Heigham, Hobbs, White, Widmer; Town Administrator Younger, Assistant Town Administrator Conti, Town Accountant Hagg, Town Treasurer Carmen; BOS Chair Firenze; School Committee Chair Bowe

Absent: Members Christensen, Allison, Paolillo, Oates, Hofmann, and Tillotson

Payson Park Music Program Request

Chair Jones began the meeting by turning the floor over to Tomi Olson, who has managed the Payson Park Music Program for the past 17 years.

Funding for the summer music concerts, Olson explained, has been comprised of private sponsor donations from insurance companies, banks, etc. For the past five years (excluding last year), the Payson Park Music Program had received \$5K from the Recreation Commission to help with one Wednesday evening concert as well as the children's concerts. However, the \$5K was eliminated last year when the recreation department had to cut \$22K from its budget. Olson explained that the costs for the children's concerts for last summer were covered by generous contributions from Member Curtis and Chair Jones, along with a contribution from the Youth Commission budget. Olson is requesting consideration for funding [\$4K] to allow for the continuation of the children's summer program - about 3 concerts. "If the town is funding other cultural programs, I would hope that it would consider helping with the children's program", she said. "It's an equity issue, and having worked for 17 years to fund the evening programs, I would hope that the town could help with the children's concerts," Olson said in conclusion.

Chair Jones said that this request would go to the BOS and the Town Administrator for a decision.

A short discussion ensued about the various sponsors and sources of funding.

Subcommittee Reports

Council on Aging

Member Doblin distributed a handout ("Council on Aging, FY08 Budget report") and declared that the major issue facing the Council on Aging concerns how to plan for the new Senior Center. They have the debt exclusion, private money has been raised, and construction is anticipated to begin in late Fall of 2007, with a move-in date of Spring 2009. (This time-line may need to be revised.)

Doblin continued: Present occupancy [i.e., at Our Lady] runs through June 2008, after which we will have to re-negotiate. Renting month by month from the archdiocese may be an option. Regarding the budget, there are not a lot of changes anticipated in staffing, since FY06 programs have been funded by the revolving fund, but we still don't have good numbers on operating expenses at the new center. Transportation costs may get reduced, as the new center is located closer to seniors who use it. Springwell will administer the new meals program using a federal subsidy and may even take over the Meals on Wheels program. While transportation is not a

core function of the Council on Aging, senior programming remains a priority. Regionalization of programs has been encouraged.

Chair Jones noted that one keeps hearing about the aging population growing in numbers, but it's younger people who are moving into Belmont. He wondered if that fact impacts the number estimates? Both BOS Chair Firenze and Member Heigham agreed that the outside (private) contributions that have been raised should go toward reducing the total debt issued for the building by the Town, and not to cover increased costs of the building. Member White wondered about the possibility of a joint Library/Senior Center building - and wouldn't that be a way out of the library issue? Firenze replied that although he has suggested such a plan, this concept is not being pursued at present. The BOS can't influence the Building Committee on this. Firenze said that he understands the seniors' concerns: They fought long and hard for this center, they waited 25 years, they are entitled to it, and it's close at hand. However, we should come together to address the collaborative idea innovatively. Town Meeting, Firenze believes, can raise the issue in October. "We need an open meeting and debate to explore this idea further," said Firenze.

Member Doblin added that this has been discussed in the past and that the Seniors didn't want to share a facility (Community Center), the Schools didn't want to give up playing field space, etc.

Education

Member Curtis distributed a handout ("Education Subcommittee, FY08 School Budget") and said that it (the handout) was basically a summary of both the education subcommittee discussions and the School Department's level service budget (which was handed out to the WC on March 10). The School Department, he said, has done an excellent job of itemizing their budget and explaining why this budget is bigger than last year's. The 7.7% increase, including programmatic needs, cannot be funded without taking more than the allocated \$800K from free cash. \$1.6M is the deficit if we fund these budgets at level service, he said. BOS Chair Firenze asked how much of the \$1.6M is allocated for the town? How much for schools? Curtis replied that that calculation hasn't been done.

Curtis continued: About \$455K of this budget covers items not included in the FY07 budget. If this amount gets pulled out, the re-adjusted level-service budget is increased by \$2,196,143 (a 6.3% increase rather 7.7%). Curtis stressed that the level service definition doesn't say whether these enhancements (2 elementary teachers to control class sizes, restoration of non-salary accounts, and MCAS remediation) are critically necessary.

Chair Jones asked if the MCAS remediation position was required? SC Member Stratford answered (from the audience) that this was the means chosen to respond to the AYP requirement [i.e., No Child Left Behind's "Adequate Yearly Progress" measure] to not fall further behind in scoring.

All subcommittee members, Curtis continued, strongly support spending free cash to the "readjusted" level of spending, and a majority support spending free cash to reach the School Department's FY08 level service budget. When asked by Member Hobbs how this support of expenditure of free cash squares with his earlier proposal to require certain savings in health care benefits from contract negotiations in order to preserve free cash, Curtis replied that the committee hasn't lost track of health insurance savings, and strongly supports the town wide figure of \$537K in net health care savings - allocating to schools 60% of that savings, and 40% to the town. Chair Jones asked if the SC had a full-day Kindergarten policy. SC Chair Bowe replied, not yet, that they are formulating a tiered response: pilot program, one school with full-day Kindergarten, etc.

Member Callanan put forth that the WC would have a full conversation on the disposition of free cash after all the WC subcommittee reports had been given. Chair Jones agreed, stating that

next week's meeting will focus on the "real numbers" which are tied in with the "cuts/adds" report from Town Accountant Hagg.

Capital Budget Committee (CBC)

Member Brusch distributed a handout and explained that the process for submitting requests will change. Presently department heads submit Capital requests to Town Accountant Hagg, who then forwards them to the Committee. Next year, the Town Administrator will receive the requests and then integrate them, which allows duplicate requests to be vetted.

Brusch then reviewed items from the handout, which fell into four main categories: recommended items, maintenance items, IT items, and Capital items not funded. She noted that the Capital Budget Committee is recommending using capital funds to pay for the bond for the high school HVAC units. They will bond for 10 years, with \$150K funded in year one.

The total CBC recommendations amount to \$2,209,100.

Member White asked about the \$500K that was left in for maintenance items from a previous proposal - where would that go? Brusch replied that that money is earmarked for the Butler School flooring, painting of the Burbank school, and a chain link fence, which totals almost \$200K. BOS Chair Firenze remarked that, in the spirit of preventive maintenance, we ought to ask Tom Younger, Bob Martin, and Kevin Looney what needs to be done - chances are they are not doing what they ought to be doing because of lack of funding. Member White agreed, but said that the \$500K figure may be overstated.

Closing

In closing, Chair Jones noted that the WC will meet on May16 and 23. He requested that the subcommittee reports be submitted to Town Accountant Hagg, and that WC members consider attending the mandatory "Open Meeting Law" training on Thursday, May 10, in the Town Hall Auditorium.

Member Heigham motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:28.

Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio
Recording Secretary