

Warrant Committee FY06 Meeting Minutes September 21, 2005

Handout(s) distributed tonight are:

1. *Proposed October 24, 2005 Special Town Meeting Articles*
2. *5/16/05 Legal expenses and settlements memo from Town Accountant Hagg*
3. *Association of Town Finance Committees September 1, 2005 letter*
4. *Projects Designed to Reduce the Cost of Providing Services*

Member(s) absent: Curtis, Solomon, White

Also present: Town Administrator Tom Younger, Asst. Town Administrator Jeff Conti, Town Accountant Hagg, and Town Treasurer Carman

Chairman Jones called the meeting to order at 7:33 PM.

Acceptance of Minutes

The Committee discussed the minutes of the September 7, 2005 meeting.

- *Member Tillotson made a motion, Member Brusch seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to accept the minutes of the September 7, 2005 meeting.*

FY07 Budget

Chair Jones updated the Committee on the Board of Selectmen's meeting regarding the FY07 Budget. Town Administrator Younger and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Holland would determine the Town/School split. Member Brusch would like Town Administrator Younger to understand the process of the past few years. He agreed.

Member Widmer thinks the Warrant Committee should be working simultaneously to put together a balanced budget. The budget we prepare should have savings from any recent initiatives and recommendations about cuts from a level service budget.

Definition of "projects" and assignment of members to projects (Handout 4)

Chair Jones reviewed the list with the Committee.

1. *Regionalization* – Member Paolillo has met with the Fire Chief, Police Chief, and Communications Director. MetroFire seems to be a viable alternative. The plan was to interview department heads, talk to Town Meeting members, and prioritize the types of regionalization that makes sense in terms of savings, feasibility, and political aspects. Member Paolillo is committed to bringing this forward in the next 30 days. Member Doblin added that Vice Chair White would be presenting a report on this topic. Member Widmer asked if the report could

include any change in legislation necessary to go forward on this topic. Members Heigham and Paolillo will go forward on this project.

2. *Outsourcing* – Chair Jones asked Member Doblin to work on this project. She is willing to take on the first bullet under Handout 4 #1 “Outsourcing of entire departments that do not provide inherently governmental functions.” As part of investigating a new business software package, Member Fitzgerald mentioned that we would be looking at the Town's payroll costs.

Member Allison contacted Bentley for providing an intern regarding some activity based costing projects. She will go investigate this further with Bentley. Chair Jones mentioned that Member White is also interested in this topic.

3. *Functional Consolidation* – Member Brusch volunteered to look further into the topics for both building maintenance and purchasing. Selectman Firenze would like to add IT to this topic.

4. *Retiree Medical and 5. Health Insurance* – Chair Jones thinks that once we know some costs, we need to go forward on a plan to include the unfunded liability. Member Widmer will work with Town Accountant Hagg on this topic. Chair Jones would like to know what the status is of all the cities and towns of the unfunded liabilities and their health insurance liabilities. Town Accountant Hagg pointed out there is a state report that has those percentages.

6. *Fees* – Member Heigham said this was reviewed pretty thoroughly a few years ago. This is not a big expense reduction, but should be looked into again. Town Accountant Hagg will review her files for the earlier report. Members Heigham and Oates will review this topic.

Selectman Firenze added there may be an opportunity to look at regionalization of outsource services. Town Administrator Younger pointed out that if you get too large a region, the area would be too large to get people to bid on the project, such as in pay-as-you-throw. Member Doblin will look at this aspect within her outsourcing topic.

7. *Other* – Member Callanan will meet with our Town Assessor to look at PILOTs in Belmont and what other towns are doing.

Town Accountant Hagg and Town Administrator Younger will work together on legal services and costs related to this topic.

8. *Additional Topics* – Chair Jones asked the Committee if there were ideas on ways to close the projected FY07 gap. Member Gibson will bring the Education Subcommittee together sooner than last year. Selectman Firenze would like to see us look at one large issue, such as trash collection, and see what other communities are doing. Where we have almost a \$2 million expense, some communities are actually breaking even. Member Doblin thinks we can look at street lighting and possibly reducing street light usage. Member Heigham thinks

the Council on Aging is a target of non-core services, and it is not being by the majority of seniors.

Discussion of Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles (Handout 1)

1. *Revise the Solicitation By-law.*

2. *Authorize the disposition of the Woodfall Road property.* Selectman Firenze said we need authority to give the Country Club some land in return for getting some land. Then we will be looking for authority to sell all the properties. The Board of Selectmen would like to see the sale of those lots be used towards the new Senior Center. The Assessor has given a proceeds estimate of \$2 million. It will be four lots with 35K square feet per lot. The Town will not put the road in; those costs would go to the developer. Member Paolillo clarified with Selectman Firenze that would not be bound to use the sale proceeds for a senior center.

Member Bruschi informed Selectman Firenze that all of the projects in the queue would go to debt exclusion. At a mega-meeting about 18 months ago, it was discussed the senior center would go to debt exclusion as well as private fundraising.

- *Member Heigham made a motion, Member Widmer seconded said motion, and Members: Jones, Widmer, Oates, Fitzgerald, Paolillo, Heigham, Bruschi, Tillotson, Callanan, Gibson, Hobbs, and Allison voted to not commit the Woodfall Road sale proceeds for any specific purpose and that we so inform the Town Meeting.*
- *Member Doblin and Selectman Firenze opposed said motion.*
SUMMARY: The vote was 12 in favor, 2 opposed of said motion.

3. *Authorize the disposition of the Central Fire Station property.* Selectman Firenze would like to sell it to the highest bidder with a good intention to build something needed in the Center. Member Bruschi does not understand why the RFP cannot restrict what the building could or could not be. Selectman Firenze said we are now working on a draft of an RFP that is expected close to Town Meeting. Member Widmer would like the wording of the Article for the October 5 Warrant Committee meeting.

4. *Proposed the new "Historic Accessory Structures Preservation" by-law.* Town Administrator Younger mentioned the Planning Board is expected to support this article. Chair Jones asked Town Administrator Younger if the assessors would revalue these properties if the new zoning passes? Also, will there be any cost to the town for the redevelopment? What is the likely impact on the value of the adjacent property? Member Bruschi asked if there was a list of properties affected. Chair Jones answered there is a list of about 40-45 properties that will be affected. The Committee will see this draft article at the October 5 meeting.

5. *Proposed funding for the municipal center security system.* The \$65K is expected to come from Free Cash.

Other

Member Heigham made a motion and it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristina Frizzell, Recording Clerk