

Minutes – Acton Finance Committee
May 6, 2008, 7:30 p.m.
Town Hall – Room 204

Pursuant to a notice duly posted with the Town Clerk and with a quorum of members present, the Acton Finance Committee convened at 7:30 pm on May 6, 2008 to review various matters.

Members present for the meeting: Pat Clifford, Steve Noone, Herman Kabakoff, Mary Ann Ashton, Pat Easterly, Bob Evans, Bill Mullin, Allen Nitschelm, Kent Sharp

Others Present: Doré Hunter, Doug Tindal, Jo-Ann Berry, Paulina Knibbe, Sharon Smith McManus.

Chairman Clifford called the meeting to order, provided an introduction to the agenda, and asked for public participation. There was no public participation offered.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Kabakoff presented minutes for the March 25 meeting. Mr. Mullin moved approval of the minutes, and Mr. Noone seconded. Mr. Nitschelm said he had not had a chance to review the minutes so he would be abstaining. The committee voted to approve the minutes 8-0-1 (Nitschelm). Mr. Kabakoff presented minutes from the two pre-Town Meeting sessions of Fincom, for April 7 and 8. Mr. Mullin moved approval of both sets of minutes, and Mr. Sharp seconded. The committee voted to approve the minutes 8-1.

Town Meeting Recap

Mr. Noone reported on a meeting convened by the Town Moderator that morning. Mr. Noone attended, as well as representatives from the Town Clerk's office, the Board of Selectmen, the School Committee, and the League of Women Voters. The group discussed ways to improve the effectiveness of town meeting, especially focusing on the logistics, handouts, information in warrant, and the length of debate. The League of Women Voters is collecting information about town meetings in neighboring towns, and will report back in the fall.

Comprehensive Community Plan – Daphne Politis

Mrs. Ashton introduced Daphne Politis of the Planners Collaborative, who presented information to the committee on the Comprehensive Community Plan. Ms. Politis distributed a diagram about the entire process (appended to minutes), and focused briefly on the outreach effort (currently underway and due to be completed by July) and more thoroughly discussed the process for the next 18 months to develop an updated Master Plan. She responded to the committee's questions and suggested that the committee (and the public) could find additional information through the website, www.actonoutreach.org. So far about 14 percent of the town's residents have responded to the survey, and an additional visioning session is planned on Saturday, May 31. Preliminary goals and objectives will be included in the report due at the end of July, and the final report will be completed in about 18 months.

Election of Officers

Ms. Clifford recognized Mrs. Easterly, who nominated a slate of officers for the Finance Committee, which included Steve Noone as Chairman, Herman Kabakoff as Vice Chair, and Mary Ann Ashton as Clerk. Mr. Mullin seconded, and the committee approved unanimously.

Ms. Clifford congratulated the new officers, and Mrs. Easterly extended thanks to Ms. Clifford for her service as chairman, and all concurred.

Town Meeting Recap (Continued)

Mr. Noone asked members whether they would like to comment on the recently completed Town Meeting. Comments included some of the following:

- Extended too many nights; too much extra activities on first night
- Concerns about lack of financial information; Fincom should focus on how to present information going forward
- Attendance concerns; “people don’t attend because they think it’s not a good use of their time.”
- Continue to work with League of Women Voters on recommendations to improve effectiveness of Town Meeting
- Needs to be more thought about who presents what at Town Meeting
- Attendance related to how concerned people are with an issue; should encourage members of boards to attend all nights
- “Scheduled votes” – some in favor, some opposed
- Better summaries of articles
- Concerns about the viability of Town Meeting

Mr. Hunter said that he had served on an earlier committee to look at Town Meeting; some of those recommendations are still relevant: time limits, ending at 10:30 p.m., use of pro and con microphones.

Committee Updates

Mr. Nitschelm reported about two meetings he had recently attended.

School Committee	Money left in budget at end of year at the Region will be approximately \$100-150,000 APS district moving ahead quickly on boilers for Douglas, Gates, Conant
WRAC	Formed two subcommittees: one to review consultants’ study, one to look at independent alternatives Two groups will come back with recommendations

Calendar

Mr. Noone distributed draft schedule of upcoming Finance Committee meetings. He asked committee members to review, noting that November was problematic because of Election Day on November 4, followed by Veterans Day on November 11.

Mr. Sharp motioned for adjournment, and it was seconded and voted unanimously. The committee adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ann Ashton
Clerk