

Minutes – Acton Finance Committee  
February 9, 2010, 7:30p.m.  
Room 204  
Town Hall

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 p.m. on February 9, 2010 to review various matters.

**Members present for the meeting:** Herman Kabakoff, Chair, Mary Ann Ashton, Vice Chair, Bill Mullin, Clerk, Pat Clifford, Pat Easterly, Bob Evans, Steve Noone, Kent Sharp, Doug Tindal, Brandy Brandon, Associate Member and Karen Kucala, FinCom, Staff Liaison.

**Public Participation**

None.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of December 8, 2009, December 22, 2009 and January 26, 2010 were approved unanimously, upon a motion by Bob Evans, seconded by Pat Clifford.

**Community Preservation Committee Status Update**

Mr. Jon Benson, chair of the Community Preservation Committee attended and provided a status report on the various proposals leading up to Annual Town Meeting. A quick summary, reflecting questions as well as status report:

- Windsor Building is down to approximately \$70k based upon Mr. Tindal's proposal to secure the property until a later time when a completely integrated space use plan can be implemented.
- 468 Main Street window project is down to approximately \$8k for some window replacements.
- Town Hall window project is down to \$40k, with mixed support on the CPC. The resistance is about timing, not need.
- Test House Building is controversial and undecided. It was built in 1833, so historical folks like it, but there remains quite a bit of skepticism about its value, and more importantly, its re-location and cost of upkeep.
- Sachem Way seems to have support and the neighborhood outreach has been working.
- Theatre III is a judgment call in terms of eligibility, as it is focused on planning rather than doing.
- Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is looking for \$250k to be allocated, although the start date on the state list is in the far horizon of 2025. By having the money allocated, Mr. Benson asserted that the project could jump the queue.
- Open Space is currently at about \$1.4mm, with \$500k to be added this year.

**WaterFall Proposal**

Mr. Mullin reviewed his proposal to pre-determine priority allocations of funds if the surprise increase of Chapter 70 money actually comes to fruition. He calls it the WaterFall proposal and it is designed to allocate funds where needed but most importantly to reduce the planned tax increase if the money comes in. Here is the text of the Proposal.

### ***The Waterfall Proposal for FY 2011.***

1. Our budget called for a 10% reduction (roughly \$1.2mm) in Ch 70 money.
2. The Governor's budget calls for holding education funding even, state wide. For us, this results in an increase of \$1mm or a \$2.2mm swing.
3. Whether or not the Governor's budget ends up being approved or changed and whether or not the Ch 70 money increases, the following "waterfall" will be the protocol for the allocation of those funds:
  - a) The first \$300 +/- of funds, roughly equivalent to the incorrect placement of APS debt service. (In other words, the SC's budget will go up by this amount, with a line item breakout on the ALG spreadsheet, for fy2011 only).
  - b) The next incremental amount of approximately \$700k, up to \$1.0m will be allocated according to the split
  - c) The next incremental amount of approximately \$500k, up to \$1.5m will be used to lower the tax rate.
  - d) The next incremental amount of approximately \$400k, up to \$1.9m will be allocated according to the split
  - e) Any additional incremental amount will be used to reduce the amount of reserves used.

In general, the committee liked the notion of planning for this eventuality, if it were to happen, but that more information is needed about our predictions of the outyears of 2012 and 2013. Skepticism remains about the probability of the Governor's plan becoming operational. Some comments were offered tinkering with the hierarchy. Chairman Kabakoff asked the committee to think about it more and he will place it on the agenda again for next meeting to determine if there is any interest in formalizing our position with respect to the WaterFall Proposal.

### **Discussion About Future FinCom Meeting Schedule**

The Chair reviewed the schedule running up to Town Meeting. No material dissent was heard.

### **ALG Plan**

The committee advised the chair to recommend a conservative three year plan.

### **Board of Selectmen Meeting of February 8.**

Ms. Clifford reported on the meeting. The Highgrove Estates 40B on the Stow/Acton line drew a large number of people. The Planning Board is down to 2 articles for Town Meeting with outdoor retail being withdrawn. Military Pay differential still is being discussed. Emerson Hospital is no longer providing Advanced Life Support, so there was a discussion about alternatives, including private supply.

### **Request for Information**

The Chair reviewed the recently supplied Enterprise Funds and Unspent Monies charts. With respect to the Unspent Monies, there were articles from long ago that raised the question of why they are still open. Also, the question was raised about how these funds are accounted for.

### **Committee Reports**

- *Health Insurance Trust.* Mr. Evans repeated again "10% is right".
- *ACHC.* Nothing to report.

- *School Committees.* Ms. Easterly continued to report about the budget discussions. She noted that the all day session on Saturday was very fruitful. Major focus is on the Level 5 cuts.
- *Community Preservation Committee.* See above.
- *South Acton Train Station.* Ms. Clifford reported about the site visit when approximately 150-175 people attended including our State House delegation, MBTA officials and a large neighborhood contingent. The local people want all design work to stop until the major scheme issues can be resolved.
- *Morrison Feasibility Task Force.* Mr. Mullin reported that the Morrison Feasibility Task Force continues to meet and that there will likely be a public meeting to discuss real options generated by the architects, in early March. These are now real options, after many, many years of thinking about this land. When the precise information is known on the meeting time and place, he will inform the Committee.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Sharp moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Tindal, approved unanimously, at approximately 9:57 pm.