

Minutes of the Meeting of the Town of Acton Finance Committee
December 14, 2004 Room 204 Town Hall

Present: J. Chinitz, P. Clifford, P. Easterly, G. Hom, H. Kabakoff, D. Stone

Absent: R. Evans, R. Roeber, J. Ryder

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Kabakoff moved approval of the minutes for the October 18, 2004 and November 19, 2004, meetings. Upon a second by Ms. Clifford both sets of minutes were approved without objection.

PUBLIC PARTICIPTION: No members of the public requested an opportunity to speak.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

ALG: Mr. Chinitz noted that Mr. Evans had provided a detailed report electronically regarding the discussion at the ALG meeting. He highlighted two items: the borrowing of \$15 million by the school department following the receipt from the Commonwealth for 75 percent reimbursement of costs for the construction of RJ Grey Junior High under the new School Building Assistance program. Mr. Chinitz noted that the ALG spreadsheets had been recalibrated to reflect predicted excluded debt.

BOS: Mr. Kabakoff reported he had attended three meeting of the Board of Selctemen on November 15, November 29 and December 13.

At the November 15 meeting discussion covered parking at the Commuter Rail Station and the citizens concern regarding sidewalks in the Martin Street area near Jones; a site plan for 30 apartments at the end of High Street; and the proposed 40B project on Sylvia Road.

At the November 29 meeting the BOS reviewed an intergovernmental agreement between the Town and the Regional School District to fund installation of field turf; the expiration of the application for a Train Whistle Quiet Zone; the agenda for the Planning Board including a new Master Plan project and re-exploration of Kelly's Corner; the tax classification hearing at which a single tax rate was established; correspondence with the Zoning Board of Appeals regarding the Woodlands at Laurel Hills, an opinion regarding the use of Bonds by the CPA and the reopening of discussions for a traffic light at Brookside Shops on 2A.

December 13: Mr. Hunter announced he will run for reelection while Mr. Schupert said he would not. The Board heard public comment of sidewalks in the Jones Field area and discussed several liquor license violations.

CPC: Mr. Ryder forwarded concerns about the bonding opportunities available to the CPC; it was noted that the appropriate option would be revenue anticipation bonds. Mr. Kabakoff mentioned that the BOS had also discussed and opposed vehemently a MAPC proposal for raiding the accumulated CPA funds for towns that have not passed the CPA.

Health Insurance Trust: Pursuing reconciliation of accounting issues.

Conservation Commission: Mr. Stone confirmed that the commission had discussed Phase III at Woodland Hills which appears to propose 70 units on an additional parcel. The CC continues to work on refining definitions and coordinating administration of previously adopted wetlands setbacks.

School Committees: Ms. Easterly reported that the APS committee met at McCarthy Towne on November 18 and scheduled budget discussions following State of the Town meeting following a presentation from Selectman Hunter regarding the FY06 Municipal Budget. She also reported that the ABRSC met the night after the State of the Town meeting and focused on means of getting more information to the voters. Leary Field issues will be discussed in January (including availability of surplus High School construction funds). School Choice was introduced; there was some interest in pursuing this alternative this year.

Mr. Chinitz reported that there are approximately 40 students who are children of school district staff who are educated in Acton at no charge to the families or the state. It is believed that if school choice were adopted by the regional school committee approximately half of these students would generate revenue reimbursements. He also listed the dates for the school committee budget meetings as follow:

- January 6th – Regional School Committee Budget meeting
- January 20th – Acton Public Schools Budget meeting
- February 3rd – Regional School Committee Budget Votes
- February 17th – Acton Public Schools Budget Votes

Life After NESWC: Mr. Stone indicated there had been no meeting to report on. Proposals still pending; however, the odds of completing a final decision for town meeting in April are declining.

ACHC: Ms. Clifford reported that ACHC was meeting simultaneously with FinCom.

Public Safety Building: Mr. Chinitz indicated that final completion of the building is temporarily delayed because the finish carpenter for some interior installations has gone out of business and the turnover date is expected to be February 1, 2005. The building is financially on track and will be on budget with a state of the art dispatching center that is drawing attention statewide. There are preliminary discussions with Boxborough to contract for police and fire dispatch services; some staff has been hired part time to begin training on the new equipment.

Association of Town Finance Committees: Ms. Clifford and Ms. Easterly distributed materials provided at the association's annual meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

State of the Town: Discussion focused on public support for the information sharing and quality of the preliminary materials.

Nagog 40B Project: The committee agreed that it would be useful to review the revenue assumptions and implications of the proposed project.

NEW BUSINESS

Following a review of budget scenarios provided by Mr. Chinitz, the committee discussed three items regarding the timing of override elections, the use of a pyramid override questions on the ballot, and the manner in which capital expenditures should be included. It was the opinion of the committee members present that a pyramid ballot question would be in order and that election should follow town meeting. Levels in the pyramid questions should each include capital spending amounts rather than separating out an operating level and then an added level solely for capital spending. Finally, the committee endorsed the establishment of a capital planning committee.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kabakoff moved adjournment at 9:40 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patricia Clifford
Acting Clerk