

February 16, 2011

To: Acton 2020

From: Mary Ann Ashton, on behalf of Acton Finance Committee

Subj: Responses to Questions for the Acton 2020 Committee

**What are you working on? What are your main projects?**

- Work with Board of Selectmen and the School Committees to assure a smooth budget process and a responsible budget to present to Annual Town Meeting
- Develop a rolling multi-year budget for planning purposes including funding for future liabilities
- Identify, quantify and recommend cost reduction opportunities

**What are your 3 (doesn't have to be precisely 3) main goals?**

- Work with Board of Selectmen and the School Committees to assure a smooth budget process and a responsible budget to present to Annual Town Meeting
- Develop and fund multi-year capital plans, working with the Board of Selectmen and School Committees
- Provide clear guidance to Town Meeting on future financial picture of the town

**What do you see as challenges and opportunities coming up in the future?**

- Balancing varying views regarding Acton's fiscal future with citizens' desire for services
- Balancing the increasing enthusiasm for regionalization of services and participation in group programs (such as the GIC) with the desire to preserve a standard and quality of services and local identity that we currently strive to provide and enjoy

**What long-range plans are you working on or contemplating working on?**

- Three-year budget plan
- Fiscal Impact analysis
- Long-range capital plan
- Cost-reduction opportunities

**What are the 3 (doesn't have to be precisely 3) things that you would like Acton citizens to know about the town (this should be in the context of what the specific committee works on)**

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- Maintaining adequate services at an appropriate quality level consistent with citizen wishes for such service and availability of sufficient revenues is a high-wire balancing act, and that in the intermediate future the revenue concerns most likely will outweigh desired additions to what we now have.
- Acton has substantial unfunded liabilities for post-employment benefits that are not readily quantified.

**Do you have any long-range planning documents you can give us for input? If not, would you be willing to draw some up? [This question may be more relevant for some committees than others.]**

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In our discussion with Margaret Busse, she said that the Acton 2020 committee was interested in developing a ten-year fiscal plan. Members of the Finance Committee discussed their perspective that there are drawbacks to forecasting local budgets that far into the future. While some of us think that a ten-year financial forecast is a fruitless and useless task, others of us would like to be included in conversations with the group about whether such a task should be undertaken, and what the assumptions would be to undertaking such a forecast.