

Call to Order

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Chair, Kevin O’Handley called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Present were Aaron Buzay, Paula Colby-Clements, Kevin O’Handley, Kim Perry, Ken Russo, Bill Haskell and Yican Cao. Paul MacKay and Andrew McBrien were absent. Also present was Chief Financial Officer, Patrick Lawlor. The meeting was videotaped and cablecast.

Annual Town Meeting Debrief and Discussion

The Finance Committee were surprised by the way the Town voted on Article 23, The Jerry Silverman Fireworks. Could the article have been pulled? There was a motion and second to amend on Town meeting floor. Kim Perry noted that she doesn’t think the amended article passed because of financial impact, but because of passion for the cause.

There was some feedback from the residents on how easily the TIF article passed with no opposition. Paula Colby-Clements noted that it speaks to how things can function at Town meeting when things are vetted properly prior to Town meeting.

It’s difficult when an amendment comes up on Town meeting floor that will have a financial impact, and it has never come before the Finance Committee to discuss as a body. Ms. Colby-Clements would like to come up with a process to be included when residents propose an amendment so that it can be discussed as a committee prior to Town meeting. Provide education for the residents on how to make an amendment or include as part of the Finance Committee report. Mr. Lawlor noted that in some cases residents have come to Town administration prior to Town meeting and the Town has worked with them from a legal perspective or a Town administration perspective. For example, last year the Town worked with the residents of Hacienda Way.

It was also discussed that when voting on next year’s warrant articles prior to Town meeting, wait for all Finance Committee members to be present.

The committee would like to work on directing residents where to go for information for example, website, recorded finance committee meetings and more reference points within the report. Alternatives to the report would have to include a bylaw change.

Mr. Haskell asked about capital projects from general fund borrowing for vehicles vs. capital projects from free cash for vehicles. Mr. Lawlor explained that we borrow longer for certain vehicles that have a longer life span. For vehicles with shorter lifespans i.e., police vehicles, we pay cash.

Review Year and Discuss Role of Finance Committee

The roll of the Finance Committee is to represent the taxpayers. They collect information, decide if it is fiscally responsible and advise Town meeting. Every year division heads meet with the Finance Committee to discuss their CIP requests and annual budgets. Former Finance Committee members often come to meetings and present. There are also several MMA seminars available for the committee to attend. The question was asked “Where does Andover want to be” The committee suggested getting a strategic town plan from administration showing the following: value of service, home values, tax rates etc. compared to other communities. Different age groups have different needs.

Other Business

Mr. Kevin Coffey, resident of 1 Stafford Lane was in attendance. Mr. Coffey recently ran for Select Board. He mentioned that the Finance Committee always votes unanimously and feels that that is not helpful. He urged the committee to take more of a taxpayer point of view and be more of a challenging body. He also mentioned that the Town is well run, we have a lot of capabilities and a lot of resources. What Mr. Coffey has learned is the only way to get anything at Town meeting is to surprise people. Mr. Coffey also mentioned that there are residents in Town that will not be able to stay here if the tax rate keeps going up. Mr. Buzay stated that the Finance Committee does debate these issues before making their recommendations. How do the residents want the Finance Committee to communicate with them? Mr. Coffey suggested that the committee identify the top ten financial related questions from residents and publish something or hold a seminar. Ms. Colby-Clements stated that never has there been more information available to the citizens. How do we communicate better and get citizens to engage. Mr. O'Handley stated that many times the Finance Committee debates and has questions. The Town comes back to the next meeting with answers and the committee debates again. The finished product is where unanimous vote comes from. We got to a unanimous vote because the Town did a good job communicating and answering all of the questions. Mr. Coffey asked what the difference was between Capital expenses and the operating budget. There was a document scanning article that seemed like it should have been an operating expense. Mr. Russo explained that the article was to purchase the software to enable it and the other part was to send the documents to the facility and getting them scanned. The capital expense was to purchase the software.

Next meeting

TBD will be a joint meeting.

Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Paula Colby-Clements and seconded by Aaron Buzay it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting. Motion Passed 7-0.

Documents:

N/A

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Salvi
Recording Secretary