

Approved: 12/14/2016
Voted: 5-0-0

ASHFIELD FINANANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date: 11/9/2016

Meeting called to order: 7:04 pm

Meeting adjourned: 9:26 pm

Members present: Mary Fitz-Gibbon, Melinda Gougeon, Carol LeBold,
T. Murray, Carl Satterfield

Others present: Kayce Warren-Interim Town Administrator, Tom Carter-
Ashfield Selectman, C. Lynch-representative of Lynch Matrix Designs

No minutes were submitted for approval.

Business

1. Special Town Meeting warrant articles

A motion was made and seconded that no recommendation be made regarding Articles 1 and 2 as there was no financial aspect to these articles. The motion passed 5, 0, 0.

A motion was made and seconded to recommend Article 3. Administrator Warren advised the Committee that this article was to correct a wording defect in a related article approved by the 2016 Annual Town Meeting. The motion passed 5, 0, 0.

A motion was made and seconded to recommend Article 4. Questions were raised regarding the use of some of the unexpended “pipeline monies” raised to fight the placement of a gas pipeline in Ashfield. Selectman Carter indicated that there is no anticipated use for these funds in the future. The motion passed 5, 0, 0.

A motion was made and seconded to recommend Article 5. Administrator Warren informed the Committee that the specified funds were to be used to cover a prior year bill for weed wacking and mowing of town property. The motion passed 5, 0, 0.

A motion was made and seconded to recommend Article 6. Administrator Warren advised the Committee that the identified funds were to be used to

pay a prior bill for Police Department advertising for officer recruiting. It was noted that the bill was 3 months old and she informed the Committee that a new process for handling bills received is being established to insure that bills will be paid in a timely manner. The motion passed 5, 0, 0.

A motion was made and seconded to recommend Article 7. Selectman Carter explained that there were timing problems in receiving the loan payment bill from Highland Ambulance EMS, Inc. and processing the payment and that, in the future, this should not reoccur. Questions were also raised relative to the Town being able to budget for this type of expense in the future and the Committee, after a lengthy discussion, was assured that this should not a problem in the future. The motion passed 5, 0, 0.

A motion was made a seconded to recommend Article 8. Administrator Warren explained that there is an active mold problem in the basement of Town Hall and that it poses a significant health problem. She also informed the Committee that W. Baenziger, an expert in environmental investigation had been asked to investigate the problem and circulated his summary report and indicated that the insurance company would cover part of the cost of mold abatement. At this point a lengthy discussion of the history of the problem ensued and several recommendations/alternatives for dealing with the problem were discussed. The conclusion was that the mold problem is very serious and there should be no delay in beginning to deal with it. The motion passed 5, 0, 0.

A motion was made and seconded to recommend Article 9. Administrator Warren informed the Committee that there was a need to pay for part-time officer coverage. In addition, as a resulting of questioning, she reported that some funds might be used for other expenses. A discussion then took place concerning general departmental expense control and budgeting. The motion passed 5, 0, 0.

A motion was made and seconded to recommend Article 10. Administrator Warren informed the Committee that the funds were needed to replace several battery back-up units and to purchase new software. She also suggested that with anticipated staffing changes there will be a need to purchase 1 or 2 new computers. The motion passed 5, 0, 0.

2. School proposed bond issue.

Chairman Murray reported that Ashfield has a future 5 year school bond payment schedule and that the regional school department has asked if this schedule should be extended to 10 years. The Committee decided to recommend that the 5 year schedule would be the better choice. Selectman Carter indicated that the 5 year approach would add approximately \$0.25 to the tax rate and would have obligation paid off before the need to fund Ashfield's broadband initiative. Chairman Murray indicated that he would communicate this recommendation to the appropriate officials.

3. Broadband updates

Chairman Murray reviewed recent developments regarding the installation of broadband in Ashfield. He also reported that the private funding concept for broadband, which had been discussed by the Committee at prior meetings, has raised several questions that might make the approach unworkable. An extended discussion followed concerning problems that might arise by using this funding approach.

4. MLP Advisory Committee

Chairman Murray reported the Ashfield Selectboard requested that the Finance Committee select one of its members to serve on the MLP Advisory Committee. Carol LeBold was nominated and unanimously voted to represent the Committee.

5. Schools BEST recommendation

Chairman Murray summarized the BEST Committee recommendations to the MTRSD School Committee describing possible future changes to the structural organization of the regional school district. He also informed the committee members of and recommended their attendance to future-planned meetings regarding this initiative.

6. Long range financial planning

Chairman Murray presented and described a spreadsheet relative to capital expenditures. Target dates of 12/16/16 and 1/17/2017 were established for submitting capital expenditure requests and general appropriation budgets respectively.

C. Satterfield reported relative to long term issues of the Ashfield Council on Aging:

- A. The Ashfield senior population has in the past and is currently doubling approximately every 10 years.

- B. As this population increases there will likely be a need for increased senior services and housing for seniors in Ashfield.
- C. The regional senior center organization will probably approach local communities for funding to support the acquisition or building of a new senior center building and to fund the expansion of the services provided seniors.

K. Warren, Town Administrator, presented the following the following items:

- A. Budget forms, including a capital projects form, are being considered for modification. It was suggested that Town Meeting members be provided with more information (previous year, current year, proposed next year) for use in citizen analysis of budget requests.
- B. The salary study request for proposals by is due by 3/1/17.
- C. Clerical cost may increase due to collector/treasurer appointments, records management, etc.
- D. The audit of town records should begin in mid-December.

7. New/Unanticipated items

C. Satterfield suggested that a time be set aside near the beginning of the meeting for questions and comments from the walk-in public. Chairman Murray said that he would provide for such a time period in future agendas.

Chris Lynch, a representative of Lynch Matrix Designs, spoke to the Committee about broadband projects of other communities describing their approaches, problems and successes. He answered various questions posed by the members.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 5-0-0.

Respectfully submitted
Carl Satterfield

Attachments:

1. Copy of Special Town Meeting warrant

2. Email from M. Kociela re. bond payment
3. Letter from Walt Baenziger
4. Letter from Massachusetts Broadband Institute
5. Email from M. Thurber re. school district reorganization
6. Long range planning spreadsheet
7. Capital project request form