

ALG Minutes, April 8, 2021, 8:30 AM via Zoom

Present: Bart Wendell, facilitator; Jon Benson and Dean Charter, BoS; John Petersen and Amy Krishnamurthy, SC; Christi Andersen and Christine Russell, FC; John Mangiaratti, Peter Light, Steve Barrett and Marie Altieri, Staff. Dave Verdolino, Finance Director ABRSD, Charlie Kadlec, public.

Extra information/documents: Agenda, March 17, 2021 Minutes, Town of Acton Multi-year financial model.

- I. Regular business
 - 1. Minutes were accepted

- II. Special Business
 - 2. **FY21 budget update**

John M said things were much the same

3. Review of model

SB: There are just some minor changes with the addition of funds from the overlay account.

Christi asked for the balance of the overlay account

SB directed her to third tab on the tax levy sheet. He added that \$553K would be added to the FY 22 budget from the overlay account. The total balance is not something that is recorded---only the annual allocation.

4. Cares Act, American Rescue plan

JM: reported that the preliminary numbers for the American rescue plan were around \$6.9m in direct aid. He expects the hear within the next two weeks to 90 days. He will be working with the state on the guidance; the state rules are stricter than the federal. Generally, he thinks it will be much the same as the CARES act but he hopes there will be a bit more flexibility.

All the work in capital improvement needs; expenses can be carried through 2024---this makes it "interesting"

Under the CARES act the town has received just over \$2m and we will be using the remainder through December. To date just over \$1.5m has been committed; \$160K was spent on public safety and PPE: \$550K was spent on teleworking. ABRSD got \$866K; Minuteman \$21K; other costs are coming in at about \$350K. That leaves little left that is not obligated.

The select board will be asked (by the district) for funds for the successful ABRSD food program. We are hoping the Rescue monies come in before the CARES money expires.

Christi: will there be new funding for lost revenues?

JM: We are cautiously optimistic.

JP: Reading reports from the Brookings Institute, there are suggestions that this is an opportunity to invest for future expenses and not just use half this year and half next. Since there is a strong possibility of being able to use the funds through FY24 we need have a discussion on how to spread the money out over time.

JM: that's correct. We will have an opportunity to do some strategic planning but we will not know the extent until we get direction. I was thinking of putting together a team to cite the needs and eligibility and how to use the funds over the next three years. There seem to be great opportunities for infrastructure expenditures and not just use it all on the operating budgets.

JP: We need to align the revenue allocations with the need. CARES money for Acton, Boxboro and the schools; the food distribution program; COVID relief; we now have to look more globally to see where there are needs. Mark Ducy from Acton TV needs money to cover healthcare costs; we should look at Acton TV and consider what is permissible and what can be done; we need a more robust IT center and internet. We can't look narrowly but need to be broader in our scope.

Peter: I'm still waiting for guidance on how to spend the Federal Funds. If they use the same formula as the Title I, it will be an allocation per school and not per pupil. We will only get something south of \$1 million. Worcester will get five times as much. The basic student opportunity act will fund the needs of the gateway cities before we get any funding. We should be hearing from the DOE soon.

5. Annual Town Meeting

The ATM is being planned for Monday, June 21.

Bart: are there any concerns?

JM: we plan on using the multiple space option; inside seating and outside seating (and hope it doesn't rain) The BOS will look at the warrant on the 26th and the goal is to have a one-night meeting; it will start at 6PM.

Christi: From the FC's view, it's unusual to have a consensus on the budget before seeing all the budgets before town meeting. It is unusual and we hope that it will not happen again.

Jon: You need to reflect that this was an unusual year and the school budget had to be approved in time for the Boxboro Town Meeting. Next year the Town Meeting budgets will be done earlier and we will be back to having the Town budget presented in early December with the hearings in January.

JP: it will be helpful if the philosophy of this year is explained. It seems to be a challenge to have just one night; there have been a lot of financial twists and turns. My questions are: can we go to two nights? Is it better now to plan for a Fall TM? That will give us more time to expand the discussion.

Jon: We will see later this month. We will look at the warrant and determine which articles can be put on the consent calendar and I think we'll be able to tell if we can have one or will need a second night. Fall TM is usually zoning bylaws while ATM is for budgets.

Bart: Any other comments?

6. Public

Charlie: With all this money coming in, I did not hear anything about using some to reduce the tax levy. I think we should consider that and not tax to the max.

Bart: shall that be put into the suggestion box?

Jon: Yes. It's a fair topic for conversation.

7. Adjournment

The next meeting is Thursday, May 13th at 8:30 AM via Zoom

Adjourned at 9AM

Ann Chang