

Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

December 10, 2024

7:30 PM

Acton Town Hall – Room 204

Present: Jason Cole (Chair, remote), Roland Bourdon, Steve Noone, Corinne Hogseth, Allison Jones (remote), Greg Jarboe and Dr. Gang Chen

Mr. Bourdon called the meeting to order.

1. Citizen's Concern

None

2. Quarterly Report

Marianne Fleckner and Ellie Anderson of the Finance Office presented the FY25 Q1 report. This is the first presentation that includes revolving funds in addition to operating and enterprise. Ms. Fleckner made introductions of the report that was then presented by Ms. Anderson.

Mr. Jarboe thanked the Finance Department for presenting in this new format. He inquired about ambulance services and mutual aid. Ms. Anderson commented those numbers would be best answered by the Fire Chief and Ms. Fleckner added the town often provides mutual aid, sometimes for example when another community's truck (i.e. ladder truck) is out of service. Mr. Jarboe also inquired about local receipts compared to last year and Ms. Anderson answered it is most likely timing of receiving the data from the State.

Dr. Chen inquired about Trusts, specifically about the Conservation Trust. Ms. Anderson answered Trusts are separate, managed by Trustees, for example the Acton Memorial Trust. Mr. David Martin commented if Dr. Chen was inquiring because of the recent Wetherbee property purchase, there are CPA funds that fund open space purchases managed by the CPC. Mr. Bourdon added the Acton Conservation Trust is a separate entity.

Mr. Cole commented there are many funds - Septage, Sewer, Fire Alarm, Building Inspector, Sealer of Weights and Measures, Roadway Maintenance - where it is a 100% carryover, an entire year buffer. If there is a reason for holding this money, would like to learn more about that. For Stormwater he sees some planned spending, would like to see how that goes. For Recreation, would like to learn more about plans for spending.

Mr. Noone inquired about the Ambulance enterprise account and spending models. Ms. Anderson commented that both the Ambulance and Transportation accounts usually receive subsidies and will note that going forward.

Ms. Hogseth also inquired about the Ambulance enterprise account and Ms. Fleckner explained that Health Care Finance and Policy, a department of the Commonwealth is responsible for creating the formulary method that is then applied by ProEMS who also takes a 4% administrative fee. Town usually nets 30 - 33%.

Mr. Bourdon inquired if Transportation funds the buses going around town and inquired about where the South Acton Train Station funds go. Ms. Anderson answered that is a special Commuter Lot fund from an Article that funds costs such as the debt service for 19-21 Maple Street. Finance Department will provide financial information on this account.

3. Cost Cutting Initiatives Review

In Ms. Andersen's absence, Mr. Cole put forward if FinCom should conduct the next Listening Session at the Senior Center, at the Library or both? Discussion ensued, majority of members felt the Senior Center was best and is already scheduled for January 28, 2025 at 6:00pm.

4. ALG Consensus Issue

Mr. Cole began discussion regarding the DPW facility and should it qualify for ALG Consensus. This topic was discussed at the last ALG meeting. Some believe there is an up or down vote at Town Meeting, it doesn't impact the ABRSD or Minuteman or doesn't affect operating budget, so therefore, doesn't need consensus. Both he and Mr. Sullivan discussed after the ALG meeting and both agreed the DPW facility should not be exempt from ALG consensus.

Mr. Noone looked at the ALG Charter. One of the main charges is to reach consensus on a multi-year financial plan. Looking back at his 20 years, don't recall exempting anything from the consensus rule. Would like to see Select Board's opinion in writing. ALG's role is not to ask for money, but ALG is a multi-year model and, therefore, has to look at long-term financial needs and models. Recommend to ask Chair to request this to the Select Board.

Mr. Cole spoke with Town Moderator. She also interprets same.

Mr. Noone expects to see a new CIP shortly, taxpayers have given us a signal that they want to see some level of restraint. If we tie up this amount of debt service, what are we leaving behind over the next 10 years?

Mr. Jarboe commented he was on the Select Board when the ALG was created approximately 40 years ago. Back then, because of Proposition 2 1/2, the town created and implemented a process. If at Town Meeting the Select Board, School Committee and Finance Committee are on different pages, that isn't good. So, ALG was created for the main purpose of building consensus for Town Meeting.

Mr. Cole commented there is pressure to come to a consensus. Mr. Cole hears FinCom's softest stance has been we might get there if the numbers get better. But, majority of FinCom members are very concerned about current DPW facility plan. Mr. Cole does not want ALG to not have consensus but he doesn't see a road to consensus or compromise.

Mr. Jarboe commented about the memo that was distributed by John Mangiaratti today with a \$2.4m savings to date with possibly more to come. Maybe an approach could be a "best effort" approach when going to Town Meeting.

Ms. Hogseth commented that changing the rules instead of breaking the ALG consensus policy would be the issue. Project is now \$47m, so saving \$2.4m is still above the original \$40m.

Mr. Bourdon agrees that ALG must have a consensus. The Schools went through the ALG process. So why wouldn't the DPW facility.

Mr. Noone made motion, Mr. Jarboe seconded to direct the FinCom Chair to request the Select Board to justify, in writing, the exclusion of the DPW facility from the ALG consensus process.

Roll call vote taken: 5-0-1 (Mr. Cole abstained)

Mr. Cole announced that Mr. Jarboe has agreed to be the DPW Facility Liaison. Mr. Jarboe will attend the next meeting Thursday evening, December 12, 2024. Mr. Cole inquired who plans on attending in case there is a majority of FinCom members in attendance.

5. Finance Committee Business

Meeting Minutes Review:

None

Liaison Reports:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - Mr. Jarboe reported they met on Friday, December 6th. The new Director resigned 2 days into the job. In the meantime, the Planning Director will provide staff support for the Economic Development study, timeline may slip. He will attend an upcoming meeting in the absence of a

Director. Also, ribbon cutting will happen this Friday, December 13th at 10:00am for the new Stop 'N Shop.

Mr. Noone announced Kent Sharp passed away suddenly the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Funeral on Thursday.

Next Meeting: January 7, 2025 at 7:30pm.

Dr. Chen made motion to adjourn, Mr. Noone seconded.
Passed Unanimously by roll call vote

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

FY2024 Q1 Financial Report
FY2025 Q1 Financial Report