

Minutes
STOW FINANCE COMMITTEE
Public Hearing
April 7, 2011
7:00 PM
Town Building
Approved

Call to Order

Gary Bernklow called the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 pm. Present were,
Members: Christopher Sarno, Ann Deluty, Richard Connelly and Peter McManus.
Associate Members: Bruce Walbridge, Eric Sears, Patricia Heron and Rick Rollins
Elizabeth Tobey, Secretary.

Discussion of Town Warrant Articles for May 2, 2011 Town Meeting

Article 1 - Town Officers Not Elected by Ballot

Article 2 - Reports of Selectmen and Other Officers and Committees

No discussion

Article 3 - Reports of Special Committees

No discussion

Article 4 - Wage and Salary Schedules for Fiscal Year 2012

No discussion

Article 5 - Secret Voting for Nashoba Regional School District Budget

David Walrath expressed concern about the article. He stated that they are still discussing what motion can be made under the article. What the article is asking for may need a bylaw change. The motion may have to be changed also. Charlie explained that this legislature couldn't bind future legislatures.

Lew Halprin explained that this article doesn't prevent anyone from voting, it prevents seeing others votes and intimidation. The high priced items create intimidation. The school budget has the same potential, 70% of our budget goes to the schools. Citizens have concerns and it is an emotional issue. He explained that he needed 10 signatures to get this article on the warrant and people wouldn't sign because they fear intimidation. There are some residents that will not come to Town Meeting because they can't raise their hand for fear of intimidation. Petitions come up every year and there is intimidation.

Dave Lindsey, a selectmen from Bolton requested a description of what the article will do.

Gary explained that the line item for the general budget has to be pulled out if it is specifically for Nashoba.

Selectmen Jim Salvie asked Lew if he intended this to be a rule for future Town Meeting. Lew explained that it might require a by-law change. Selectmen Tom Ryan suggested moving what was submitted and any one person could move to amend it.

Bill Byron commented that the school budget wasn't always in the consent calendar. Gary explained that it is not in the consent calendar, it is in the general budget. Jim Salvie stated that the Nashoba Regional School District assessment proposed by the school committee, if they reject or modify any part of it is the same as rejecting it all.

Article 6 - General Budget for fiscal year 2012

There was concern expressed about the increase of the Nashoba Regional School District budget.

BEGINNING OF THE CONSENT CALENDAR

Article 7 - Reserve Fund

The reserve fund has distributed \$11,286 with a remaining balance of \$58,713. There is still Snow & Ice, the Board of Health Hazardous Waste and the Fire Department will be coming back for funds.

Article 8 - Audit of Financial Records

Gary explained that the audit is done yearly.

Article 9 - Revolving Fund for Inspection Fees

No comments

Article 10 - Revolving Fund for Advanced Life Support Services

Patty Heron asked if this was new because the wording says "establishment" and it has never been in the wording in the past.

Article 11 - Transfer to Conservation Fund - Land Maintenance

No comments

Article 12 - Transfer from Wetlands Protection Fund

No comments

Article 13 - Update of Property Valuations

No comments

Article 14 - Town Records Binding and Repair

No comments

Article 15 - Election Equipment

The Town is going to have two precincts and will need to purchase the equipment to cover both. They will need double personnel, which is in the Clerks budget. It suggested it should be in separate article. It was noted that the clerk's budget had not increased and she will need a total of two clerks and two wardens for voting.

Article 16 - Highway Road Machinery and Private Ways

David Walrath explained that a private way is different than a private drive. The Selectmen have to approve it and it is typically requested by the Fire Department.

Article 17 - Highway Road Construction

It was explained that they are standard road improvements and the town pays for it and gets reimbursed from the state.

Article 18 - Federal Safe Drinking Water Act

No comments

Article 19 - Household Hazardous Waste Collection

Ann explained that the Board of Health has already had a reserve fund transfer on this and is trying to get out of the contract.

Article 20 - Public Health Nurse

No comments

Article 21 - Municipal Solid Waste Disposal

This is for large trash articles to be disposed of.

Article 22 - Medical Reserve Corps Expenses

No comments

Article 23 - Construction and Maintenance of Water Holes for Firefighting Operations

No comments

Article 24 - Stow Cultural Council

No comments

Article 25 - Planning Board Engineering/Consulting and Master Plan Expenses

Has decreased by \$5,000

Article 26 - Employee Educational Incentive Program

Tom explained that this was put in as a special article, should the voters want to take it out. The higher-ranking officials are not included.

Article 27 - Legal Services

No comments

Article 28 - Police Officer and Firefighter Medical Payments

This is for injuries in the line of duty.

Article 29 - Weights and Measures Testing

This is required.

Article 30 - SwiftReach 911 Notification System

No changes.

Article 31 - Lake Boon Water Quality Remediation

Has increased \$2,000

Article 32 - Transfer From Overlay Surplus to Snow & Ice Account

No changes

Article 33 - Transfer from Free Cash to the Stabilization Fund

No changes

Article 34 - Veterans' Benefits

Has increased \$3,400

Article 35 - Community Preservation Expenses

Slight Decrease

Article 36 - Community Preservation Reserves

No changes

END OF THE CONSENT CALENDAR

Article37 - Capital Requests

Item 1 – Building Department – Town Water Treatment Center Upgrade - \$29,000

No comments

Item 2 – Cemetery – Land Purchase – \$200,000

Ellen Sturgis questioned the location of the land. Gary explained the land is adjacent to Brookside and at a good price.

Item 3 – Fire-Rescue – Diesel Exhaust System - \$50,000

This is a system to remove harmful diesel fumes from the Fire Department building from fire trucks and equipment exhaust.

Item 4 – Fire Rescue – Thermal Imaging Camera (1) - \$9,500

This is a thermal image camera \$9,500 for one multipurpose tool. When used in buildings it allows the user to see colors in people through smoke. It is also used for finding fire behind walls, causing less damage to homes.

Item 5 – Fire Rescue – SCBA Grant Co-Pay - \$6,000

This is for new equipment. A new self-contained breathing apparatus.

Item 6 – Health – Dog Kennel Repairs - \$15,000

Original request was for a new building for \$40,000. They will fix and upgrade the one they have now.

Item 7 – Highway – Restore 6-Wheel Dump Truck/Sander - \$40,000

This is for an upgrade and renewal

Item 8 – Highway – Replace Road Grader - \$37,000

To replace the old road grader

Item 9 – Library – Building Repairs - \$100,000

Structural final fixes for leaks. Craig Martin hired someone to figure out how to fix it. It includes; mold abatement, solving what is solvable and patching the inside. They are also planning a roof replacement.

Item 10 – Planning Board – Lower Village Engineering Plans - \$43,334

No comments

Item 11 – Police Department – 2011 Crown Victoria Police Cruiser - \$33,000

2011 Crown Vic, this will be the last one, the Crown Vic is being retired.

Article 38 - Senior Tax Relief

Doubles what state sets. It must be redone each year.

Article 39 - National Guard/Reserve Tax Relief

Similar to the Senior Tax Relief

Article 40 - Amend Zoning Map on Wireless Service Facility District

This needs to be amended because of the tower on Wedgwood Pines. The ZBA declined it because it is outside the zoning district.

Article 41 - Preserve the Larsen Apple Storage Barn

Janet Stiles commented that this is a citizen's article to ask the town if they would like to preserve the stone barn. She feels there are a number of options available, a development situation or a museum or returned it to a stone apple barn. Chris questioned that there was no appropriation of expenditure. "Is the ultimate attempt to change the current plans of the center project"? Janet explained that there is a plan with the stone building remaining. She would like it retained as a historical landmark. It would be the responsibility of the town and not the school system. Ann questioned if she was visualizing a not-for-profit taking control of the piece of land. Janet replied that the building would not be expected to be a profitable building but could be a neutral building. She thinks the question is "should the town save the building". Could it be used to make revenue or restored to original condition? When asked if she had a step two for the building she stated she did not, she was going one step at a time. Rick Connelly asked what she wanted to have done with the building. Janet suggested just saving it and not to demolish it. She is not afraid of the cost and is not asking for something that is very expensive. If it is preserved there is availability for CPC funds and many organizations through government for funding.

Chris commented that this isn't the ultimate end of where she wants to go. What are all the costs? The end does matter. There is a need to know the ultimate cost. There is a timetable at the school.

Janet suggested it is a fear that has been ungrounded, they don't need new plans, and there are existing plans. Change orders have a cost and timetable. It's not as involved as moving a dumpster full of asbestos. It will have to go in front of the boards They will lose a small play area and 9 or 10 parking spaces. Chris replied that there are a lot of unknowns in the terms of cost.

Ellen explained that she doesn't have any numbers at that moment, but there is only one set of plans. It took 8 or 9 months to develop one set of plans. This is a huge issue. The only option is to seal it up. It is not up to code. The play area for the kindergarten and the pre-k would have to be relocated somewhere else. It has been one or more years and there hasn't been any money raised to fund this. CPA would be the best chance.

Janet commented that the West School is not boarded up but is closed. Historic buildings are exempt from handicap updates. It is not a costly under taking. Looking to find out if the town wants to save the building. Chris commented that it is not so much the fear of specific cost, but the fear of unknown costs. Rick R. commented that the Massachusetts Historical Society did not find it met their criteria for a historical building.

Patti asked if Town Counsel had determined if it was a viable article. Tom Ryan stated that the Selectmen voted to put it on and let the people vote the decision. Jim expressed serious concern of the vagueness of the article. Chris asked if there was a chance we could be in limbo.

Janet explained that all ballot articles are not binding. She feels the members shouldn't have fears for the vote on the ballot and on the warrant, it has passed muster. They never rescinded the 1954 warrant article, which voted to preserve and protect it. Town Counsel deed wasn't mentioned. Please allow a fair decision

Article 42 - Reuse of Pompositticut Elementary School

Ellen expressed concern with the wording. Ann explained that they can't do anything until they give it to us. Tom commented that the town owns the property and the building. We lease for \$1 a year. They retain full care and custody. When they are done we get it back. Jim commented that it allows the town to accept the building back and use it for none school use. Ann was concerned about the wording, not to be limited to town offices only. Bill Byron commented that they are basically terminating the lease. He then questioned if the town would have to rescind the vote from 1964. Gary explained that Town Counsel had looked at the wording and said it is good to go. Ellen suggested the school would have to vote to turn it over. They are only changing the decision on the 1964 vote. Peter asked what the terms are now with the school. Ellen replied that as long as they need it they can keep it.

Article 43 - Nomination Papers Deadline

Change in Massachusetts general laws

Article 44 - Revocable Agriculture Licenses

Conservation has a section of land in mind to allow someone to farm it, but also be able to revoke it.

Article 45 - Acceptance of Randall Road Sidewalk Easement

Article 46 - Balance the Fiscal Year 2012 Budget

Article 47 - Town Election

A motion to Close the public hearing was made by Ann Deluty at 9:41 pm. Christopher Sarno seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously – (Bernklow, Deluty, McManus, Sarno and Connelly)

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth A. Tobey,
Secretary