

SELECTMAN'S MEETING
APRIL 12, 1999

ATTENDANCE: Christopher J. Petrini, Valerie W. Mulvey, John M. Kahn, Esther A.H. Hopkins.

Mr. Petrini called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

The purpose of the meeting was to review budget decision questions and take positions on the warrant articles.

BUDGET DECISIONS:

CFO Mark Rees submitted twenty-one budget decision questions to the Selectmen. The decision questions basically highlighted major differences between FY99 and FY00 policy considerations.

Mr. King stated that the Selectmen received budget questions from the CFO necessitating policy decisions. Mr. Rees stated that the Finance Committee had met and taken a position on most of the questions.

Mr. Rees said the first set of questions dealt with regulatory issues generating revenues. The Finance Committee voted six in favor, one against, the question relative to raising Board of Health inspection fees.

1. Revenues - Increase of Board of Health revenue by \$40,000 -to accrue to the town by increasing the current fee structure approximately 70% to cover the total cost of the Board of Health to carry out its regulatory responsibilities. The CFO recommended support.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Rees stated that the purpose of the rate structure was to recoup the costs for the inspections. Mr. King stated that the fees generated would be proportional to running the Health Department. Ms. Mulvey asked if the fee schedule would be provided. Mr. Ottaviani, Precinct 11, stated that fees were just increased, inspections usually take one hour, and he felt the fee structure was excessive. Mr. Rees stated that the costs recouped would be used to cover the total cost of the Board of Health to carry out its regulatory responsibilities. Ms. Mulvey asked if there was an additional charge for a second visit to an establishment. Mr. Ottaviani stated that a fine was issued, but there was no charge for a follow up visit. Ms. Hopkins thought if costs were justified, the recommendations of the CFO should be followed. Mr. Rees stated that other fee structures have not been examined and could be reviewed if the Board desired. Mr. King agreed and felt the issue was somewhat philosophical since the town has the right to increase fees. He thought it reasonable for fees to equal the cost of inspections. Mr. Kahn suggested another way to approach the subject might be to charge an hourly rate for inspections. Mr. Ottaviani thought Mr. Kahn's suggestion was reasonable. Mr. Kahn noted that the hourly fee might not be cheaper, just a different way of administrating. Mr. Petrini would like Mr. Rees to look at overall fee structures for purposes of fairness.

MOTION:

Moved to by Mr. Kahn, seconded by Ms. Mulvey, to accept the recommendation of the CFO and Town Manager. So voted, unanimously. Both the CFO and Town Manager were asked to review the town's fee structures.

The decision of how to raise the funds is up to the Board since the Selectmen ultimately vote to implement any new fee structure.

2. Increase of fees for town's garage and parking lots - does the Board agree with the recommendation to double parking fees for the town's garage and parking lots to increase revenues by \$200,000. The Finance Committee voted in favor of this recommendation.

Mr. Kahn asked if the basic fee structure had been examined. Mr. King thought there was some merit in selling the garage overall. He noted that the Planning Department felt the market would bear the price increase. Mr. Petrini expressed concern about the jump in fees and would not support a 150% increase. Ms. Mulvey stated that the downtown might be impacted by this plan. Mr. King was in favor of reserving some of the spaces for daily parking. Mr. Petrini asked the status of the Conrail lot. Currently there is no final plan for offering additional spaces. Mr. Petrini asked what the annual cost of operation was. Mr. Rees thought \$50-60,000. Ms. Hopkins did not think raising the price of the lot would send commuters to Boston since it would still be cheaper to park in Frammingham then go into town.

MOTION:

Moved by Mr. Kahn, seconded by Ms. Mulvey, to accept the recommendation of the CFO and Town Manager with respect to doubling fees at the parking garage. So voted, unanimously.

3. Increase of fees Sealer of Weights and Measures - do the Selectmen agree with the recommendation to increase Sealer of Weights and Measures revenue by \$28,000 over FY99? The additional revenue would accrue to the town by increasing the current Sealer and Weights and Measures needed to carry out regulatory responsibilities. Mr. Kahn asked if the inspection fees were annual. Mr. Rees stated that they were. Ms. Hopkins asked what type of devices were used for inspections. She wondered if the Sealer got paid for inspecting scanners. Mr. King will investigate. Mr. Rees stated that regulation on scanners is anticipated at the state level. Ms. Hopkins expressed concern about the equity of the increase.

MOTION:

Moved by Ms. Mulvey, to support the CFO's recommendation to increase the revenue in Weights & Measures by \$28,000, to cover the total cost necessary to carry out regulatory responsibilities. Seconded by Mr. Kahn, and so voted.

4. Overall revenue projections - Do the Selectmen agree with overall revenue projections in the budget including subsequent changes itemized. Significant changes in revenues as compared to Mr. Rees' February 22nd memo were listed. Mr. Kahn asked whether the Board should take a position on the items now or wait for the budget sub-committee's review. Both Mr. King and Mr. Rees agreed that the Selectmen should delay their vote on this question.

MOTION:

Moved by Mr. Kahn, seconded by Ms. Mulvey, to table a decision on questions 4-8 until a future meeting. So voted, unanimously.

9. Upgrade of Wyatt study - does the Board of Selectmen support the \$50,000 expenditure for upgrade of the Wyatt study? Mr. Rees stated that the primary purpose of the request was to implement an equitable pay program for town employees, however the Personnel Board did request some flexibility with the use of funds. Mr. King agreed with the recommendation and thought the pay classification plan needed re-vamping. No expenditures would occur until a new Director of Human Resources was hired. Ms. Hopkins wondered if the \$50,000 would be enough for the study or would more be requested. Mr. King stated that an RFP would be sent out, but no action would take place until the Board was consulted. Mr. Rees noted that implementation of any pay plan would involve costs to the town.

MOTION:

Moved by Mr. Kahn, seconded by Ms. Hopkins, to accept the recommendation of the CFO and Town Manager and support the expenditure. So voted, unanimously.

10. Budget for Downtown Manager - does the Board support placing funding for the Downtown Manager in the Planning Department budget? Mr. Rees stated this item was more managerial and did not involve a dollar expenditure. The Planning Department would retain administrative control over this position. The Finance Committee voted in favor of the recommendation. Ms. Mulvey asked if the EDIC was in favor of the change. Mr. Rees stated that the issue was strictly administrative, not unlike the situation with the Human Relations Administrator who reports to the Police Chief. Policy direction for the Downtown Manager would still be received from the EDIC. Mr. Kahn had serious problems with the recommendation and recalled that the Downtown Manager was to be supervised by the EDIC and Downtown Solutions. As it appears now, Mr. Kahn said the position seems to have evolved into the Planning Division. He thought the Downtown Manager should be part of the Town Manager's staff and participate in staff meetings until the responsibilities of the position are clearly established. Mr. King said that he recognized the area of concern involved appropriate supervision of the employee. He would be willing to be involved in overseeing the position, and felt Mr. Kahn's points were well taken. Ms. Mulvey agreed with Mr. Kahn and asked if the position was in the Planning Department budget. If so, would staffing be impacted? Mr. Rees said that the position was, "stand alone". He reported that there was a separate line item for the Downtown Manager's salary. This line item could be shifted to another department's budget. The Downtown Manager's office is located in the Planning Department at present. Ms. Mulvey suggested the possibility of housing Ms. Flores at the Hollis Street Fire Station. Mr. King will review options with regard to establishing an office for Ms. Flores, the town's first Downtown Manager.

MOTION:

Moved by Ms. Hopkins, seconded by Mr. Kahn, to place funding for the Downtown Manager's position in the Town Manager's budget, however, policy direction for the position would continue to be generated from the EDIC. A separate line item will be established in the Town Manager's budget for the Downtown Manager position. The Selectmen also included in their motion a request that the Downtown Manager's Office be located in downtown Framingham. So, voted unanimously.

11. Hiring four civilian police dispatchers - do the Selectmen agree to support funding for four additional dispatchers? The cost to the town would be \$28,000 because of a grant already in hand. The grant will decrease in match in future years with long term financial forecasts indicating a questionable ability for maintaining the positions. Mr. Rees did not recommend funding. Mr. King expressed some concern about the COPS grant which requires the town to maintain the same level of staffing. However, money saved in overtime would be significant. Chief Larrabee has agreed to reduce his FY00 overtime budget by \$50,000, \$28,000 of which will be used to pay one-quarter share of the salaries, and \$22,000 returned to the town. Mr. King also reported that there was a possibility of funding in future years. Mr. Khan asked if the Chief would make the overtime reduction commitment for future years. Mr. King stated that the some idea of the overtime could be computed by looking at previous years, however, the overtime budget could still go up in the future. Mr. Kahn stated that some overtime was due to using police officers in the dispatch position. Mr. Petrini would like a written memo from the Chief outlining costs, etc.

MOTION:

Moved by Ms. Mulvey, seconded by Mr. Kahn, to table this budget question. So voted, unanimously..

12. Delay of purchase of police cruisers until fall town meeting - does the Board agree with this recommendation? Mr. Rees did not minimize the need to replace cruisers, but suggested a delay due to fiscal constraints. Mr. Petrini thought that the Board should wait to make a decision pending the outcome of further negotiations with the schools. Mr. Rees agreed that funding for cruisers would be a first priority should revenue become available.

MOTION:

Moved by Ms. Mulvey, to accept the recommendation of the CFO. Seconded by Ms. Hopkins and so voted, unanimously.

13. Funding for one half of phase 2 field maintenance as opposed to hiring activities supervisor- what is the Board's position on this matter?

MOTION:

Moved by Ms. Hopkins, seconded by Ms. Mulvey, to table discussion. So voted, unanimously.

14. Salary reserve funding for municipal employees - does the Board agree with this recommendation? The recommendation would allow for a 3% salary adjustment for non-union town employees effective July 1, 1999.

MOTION:

Moved by Mr. Kahn, seconded by Ms. Hopkins, to support the recommendation of the CFO, including the proviso of the Finance Committee that the Town Manager be requested to investigate and report back on the possible implementation of a merit pay system for division managers. So voted, unanimously.

15. Monetary article from Conservation Commission seeking \$40,000 funding - Does the Board agree not to fund this article? Mr. Rees did not recommend approval of funding. The money would be allocated to the Conservation Fund to foster conservation programs. Ms. Hopkins asked what was in the fund. Mr. Rees reported there was approximately \$20,000. Ms. Hopkins asked if it might be possible for Framingham to implement land use taxes. Mr. Rees said that the state legislature would have to vote on such a tax. Ms. Hopkins suggested that the Conservation Commission investigate how to use the land use tax. Ms. Mulvey suggested convening a meeting to pursue this avenue.

MOTION:

Moved by Ms. Mulvey, to support the CFO's recommendation not to fund this request and, as part of the motion, schedule a joint meeting with the legislators, Conservation Commission and Board of Selectmen. Seconded by Ms. Hopkins, and so voted, unanimously.

16. Recommended expenditures in the budget - does the Board agree with the overall recommended expenditures?

MOTION:

Moved by Ms. Hopkins, seconded by Ms. Mulvey, to table a decision on this question. So voted.

17. Not funding two watch persons and purchasing emergency generator - Does the Board agree with this recommendation? The Finance Committee voted to support the CFO's recommendations. Mr. Rees said the basis for the recommendation was to keep costs low. The Board of Public Works was not in favor of this recommendation. Ms. Mulvey asked if the position was funded. Mr. Rees said that the Public Works Department used money in their budget to fund the positions.

Mr. Rees' recommendation is to cut the positions and use an answering service for dispatch. Mr. Kahn would like a more extensive report. He went on to say he would be in favor of funding the positions with persons who were familiar with the operation of the sewer and water system and thought public service required capable staffing of the positions. Mr. Nau, DPW Union, was not in favor of eliminating the position.

MOTION:

Moved by Ms. Mulvey, to table questions 17 & 18 until the Town Manager meets with appropriate personnel. Seconded by Ms. Hopkins, and so voted.

18. Depreciation of water and sewer rates - do the Selectmen agree to include or not to include depreciation in the water and sewer rates? Capital Budget recommends that we use all our retained earnings with the exception of 5% to be kept in an emergency reserve account. Mr. Rees stated that the town needs to put a system in place with increased rates funding depreciation expenses while borrowing to make sure that the contingent to maintain our infrastructure is available. Ms. Hopkins asked what a unit was. Mr. King stated that it was approximately 750 gallons.

MOTION:

Moved by Ms. Mulvey, seconded by Mr. Kahn, to take no action. So voted.

20. Subsidizing Arena enterprise fund - does the Board agree to subsidize this fund? Based on projected FY00 revenues and recommended expenditures, it appears as if the Arena enterprise fund will be out of balance by \$54,398. The arena should be considered as a community asset. Mr. Rees suggested that the Parks and Recreation Department consider developing other revenue sources. Mr. Kahn reported that when the arena was built the town was given a guarantee that it would be self-supporting. He asked if the funding was one time. Mr. Rees thought that a subsidy would be necessary for a number of years. Mr. Kahn felt it was important that the town understood the nature of the subsidy. Mr. Merusi stated that the rink never covered its costs but the new accounting system pointed out the deficit more clearly. Ms. Hopkins asked if the enterprise fund covered the cost of funding arena capital costs. Mr. Merusi stated that locker room space was inadequate, refrigeration was necessary, as well as many more structural improvements. He estimated a million dollars might be necessary for renovation of the facility. The policy question before the Board was whether to endorse the use of \$47,562 to subsidize the arena.

MOTION:

Moved by Ms. Hopkins, seconded by Ms. Mulvey, to utilize \$47,962 of general fund revenues to support the arena for FY00. So voted, unanimously.

21. Position on monetary articles 39, 41, 43 and 44

Two articles will be withdrawn. There is a \$20,000 request for a study on renovating the Danforth Street Bridge. Mr. Rees did not recommend funding at this time. With regard to acquiring land near Saxonville Beach, the land is for sale for \$7500. Hopefully, MWRA funds will be used for the purchase. Mr. Kahn asked what the cost would be to improve the beach with the addition of the property. Mr. Merusi did not present any figures at this point. Mr. King recommended that the purchase the property.

Mr. King raised a policy issue for the Board. He discussed the election budget, stating there would be a primary next year. The Board can change the dates of next year's election by running the preliminary election the same day as the presidential primary. Mr. King thought it was a difficult process, but would save \$20,000. Mr. Petrini requested a recommendation from Ms. Hawes. Mr. Kahn suggested that the town should consider the impact on the voting patterns and would like both cost and electoral impact studied.

WARRANT ARTICLES:

Article 1 - Annual Report

Article 2 - Street Acceptances - Mr. King noted that there would be hearing on April 15th.

Article 3 - Discontinuance of Gilmore Road - Mr. King stated that Gilmore Road was not a public way and he recommended discontinuing the portion.

Article 4 - Housing and Community Development - supported by Board.

Article 5 - Transfer of Mary Dennison Park - 15,000 square feet of land is in question. An abutter to the property wishes to purchase the parcel. Mr. Merusi stated that the property was in a commercial district. The Park Commission has no use for the property and has no objection to selling the parcel. Mr. King expressed concern about the size of the parcel and recommended that the town find out what the purchaser proposed for the site. No action was taken by the Board.

Article 6 - withdrawn

Article 7 - supported

Article 8 - Option C benefits for non-contributory retirees-Mr. King explained that the article would involve a liability of \$42,000. Mr. King recommended acceptance. The Retirement Board recommended approval.

MOTION:

Moved by Ms. Mulvey, seconded by Ms. Hopkins, to support the article. So voted.

Article 9 - COLA for noncontributory retirees.

Moved by Ms. Mulvey, seconded by Ms. Hopkins, to support Article 9. So voted.

Article 10 - approve Community Economic Development Plan

Mr. King was asked to determine whether the Board had taken a position on this article at a previous meeting.

Article 11 - approval of amendment of Article VI, Section 6.1 of by-laws regarding penalties for non-payment of water and sewer bills. Withdrawn.

Article 12 - Brownfields Clean-up

MOTION:

Moved by Ms. Mulvey, seconded by Ms. Hopkins, to support the article. So voted.

Article 13 - Special check-off box to help low income families with tax relief. The check-off will place a check-off on property tax or motor vehicle excise bills in order to seek contribution to assist low income or disabled tax payers.

MOTION:

Moved by Ms. Mulvey, seconded by Mr. Kahn, to support the article. So voted.

Article 14 - amend Framingham Wetlands by-law, Article V, Section 18 - adding language protecting rivers.

MOTION:

Moved by Mr. Kahn, to table pending review with the Conservation Commission. Seconded by Ms. Mulvey, and so voted.

Articles 15 - 16 - amendment of by-laws (requested by Government Study Committee)

The appointments appear to be policy appointments and should be made by the Selectmen.

MOTION:

Moved by Mr. Kahn, seconded by Ms. Hopkins, to support both. So voted.

Mr. King was asked to check with the Conservation Commission and Boston Properties to insure that representatives of each will come before the Selectmen to review their articles.

MOTION:

Moved by Mr. Kahn, seconded by Ms. Mulvey, to adjourn at 10:05 p.m.


ESTHER A.H. HOPKINS, CLERK

11/10/05