

Barrington Committee on Appropriations

Meeting Minutes

May 6, 2014

Opening

The regular meeting of the Barrington Committee on Appropriations was called to order at 7:00 pm on May 6, 2014 in the Barrington Senior Center by Tim Sweetser.

Present

Appropriations: Tim Sweetser, Chair; Geoff Grove, Vice-Chair, Joel Hellmann, Chad Mollica, and Peter Clifford.

Town Council: June Speakman, President; Kate Weymouth, Vice-President; Cindy Coyne, Bill DeWitt, and Ann Strong.

Peter DeAngelis, Town Manager; Kathy Raposa, Town Finance Director

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was unanimously approved as distributed.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the prior meeting were not voted on because they were not ready.

Open Issues

Steve Martin of the Housing Board introduced the request for \$750,000 to fund the Affordable Housing Fund. The idea is to buy homes in Barrington, improve them, add a deed restriction, and then sell the home. This would be a revolving fund. Every sale will have a deficit. Steve anticipates that 2 to 3 homes would be purchased in the first year. The deficit that could be, for example, \$150,000 after the first year, would have to be replenished from some source, hopefully, RI Housing or some other State source. Before any money is spent, a plan will be in place to establish the framework for how this will work.

Peter Clifford asked why the request is \$750,000. Steve Martin responded that the number was arrived at so that the Board can handle three concurrent transactions.

Chad Mollica asked what criteria will be used to acquire homes and will the Town take title to the homes? Steve answered that an RFQ was sent out and Barbara Sokolove responded to create a process that the Housing Board will follow. And, the Town will not take title to the homes. Even though we are using taxpayer money? Yes. How much will the plan cost? \$15,000. There is CDBG money that will be returned to the source if

the Affordable Housing Fund is not funded. There are no other sources of funding other than the Town at this point. The Spencer Trust is not a viable source. The Town Council voted 4 to 1 last night to approve the concept and request the funds. Council President Speakman noted that this approach to affordable housing is the best strategy to reach our affordable housing goals. This approach will prove that Barrington is attempting to address the affordable housing goal set by the State.

Tim asked whether the money will be committed if the Appropriations Committee approves this request tonight. Can the COA provide conditional approval tonight and refuse to fund it later? The answer is not clear.

Molly Lee from the Housing Trust noted that this has been in the works for the last 8 years since the Housing Trust was created, but not funded. She believes that time is of the essence because 'tear downs' are a regular occurrence and is changing the character of the Town and we will lose the few homes that are still available.

Tim feels that this request is too much, too fast, too soon because this matter was brought to the COA only one week before the Budget Hearing. Joel added that 6-4-3 of the Town Charter specifies that the Town budget will be presented to the COA no less than 60 days prior to the Financial Town Meeting. Since our budget recommendation is due in only a matter of days, we do not have time to properly consider this request. Even if we bond this instead of adding it to the budget, we have to deal with the annual deficits. Joel thinks that \$750,000 is too small to bond, therefore the request is too small.

Gary Morse believes that the details are essential to the discussion, particularly because there is no 'clawback' provision.

Tim accepted a motion to deny the request for \$750,000 and to direct the Housing Board to present a detailed plan to Appropriations next year in time for the Committee to understand the proposal and give it due consideration. A vote was taken and the motion was passed unanimously.

Peter DeAngelis presented the Town Council request for \$1.6 million for the Village Center Streetscape Improvements Project. Council President Speakman discussed the merit of doing this project all at once rather than in phases.

Geoff expressed the idea that some of the \$4 million road bond should be used for the improvements to the road portion of the Village Center Project, thereby forcing the Town to prioritize the road improvements. Chad disagreed, expressing the idea that the road bond passed last year was expressly for the improvement to roads and drainage around the entire town, and that the proposal to improve the Village Center (Maple Avenue and

surrounding streets) should stand on its own and be voted up or down by the townspeople.

Tim accepted a motion from Joel that we present a bond issue to the FTM in the amount of \$1.6 million for the Village Center Connectivity Plan. It was seconded by Geoff. The vote was unanimous in favor.

The municipal budget was discussed. At the previous meeting, the COA voted to remove \$50,000 from the Government Utilities (0365), Peck Center Utilities (0366), Public Safety Complex Utilities (0367), Public Works – Electricity (0260 – 2030), and/or Public Works – Heating Fuel (0260 – 2040).

Peter DeAngelis spoke passionately against a cut to the Town Solicitor budget. Chad made the point that legal rates are under downward pressure. Peter countered that there are several legal challenges coming up that will cause legal bills to go up again this year. He is concerned that he may exceed this year's budget, and next year will be worse. Joel made a motion to reverse last week's decision to lower the Town Solicitor budget (0310) by \$38,500 and restore the original requested amount of \$163,500. Geoff seconded the motion. The vote was 4 in favor, 1 against. Chad voted against the measure. The motion carried and the funds were restored.

Tim asked that line item 3220 Ammunition for the Police Department be increased from \$6,000 to \$10,000 because the cost of ammunition has risen precipitously. Peter DeAngelis said the Police Chief would welcome this increase. Joel made the motion and Chad seconded it. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Changes to the Capital Budget were discussed. At the last meeting, the COA voted to remove the \$250,000 request for Streetscape Improvements to the Village Center. It was also approved at the last meeting to move the School request for Technology of \$275,000 to the Capital budget.

Agenda for Next Meeting

The School budget will be discussed and acted on at the next meeting.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 9:02 by Tim Sweetser. The next general meeting will be at 7:00 pm on May 7, 2014, in the Barrington Senior Center.

Minutes submitted by: Geoff Grove

Approved by: COA 5/7/14