

Barrington Committee on Appropriations

Meeting Minutes

March 15, 2016

Opening

The regular meeting of the Barrington Committee on Appropriations was called to order at 7:04 p.m. on March 15, 2016 in Barrington Senior Center Activity Room by Geoff Grove.

Present

Peter Dennehy, Melissa Horne, Richard Staples

Also attending: Peter DeAngelis (Town Manager), Phil Hervey (Town Planner), Anne Galbraith (Capital Improvement Planning Committee), Ann Strong (Council Liaison), Lisa Daft, Tom Rimoshytus

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was rearranged in order to accommodate members of the public that wanted to brief the committee on school start times.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously approved as distributed.

Open Issues

Lisa Daft discussed the increase to the school budget due to the [now delayed] school start times and bus schedule realignment. She noted that even though the school start time initiative has been delayed or postponed, the bus schedule realignment will cost the district approximately \$430,000. The purpose of this realignment is to shorten the bus rides for children attending the Barrington Public Schools. Lisa noted that Mike Messore, the Superintendent of Barrington Public Schools, has been quoted as saying that the existing bus schedule is “efficient.” Ms. Daft suggests that the existing bus schedule is adequate, and thinks that the Appropriations Committee should consider reducing the proposed school budget by \$430,000.

The question of Financial Town Meeting (FTM) protocol was raised. Specifically: how far in advance of the FTM must an amendment to the budget be made? The answer can be found in the Town Charter here: Chapter C: Charter 7-1-15 LIMITATIONS ON MOTIONS FOR APPROPRIATIONS. <http://ecode360.com/13124159>.

The Capital Budget was presented by Anne Galbraith representing the Capital Improvement Planning (CIP) subcommittee of the Planning Board. They recommend a budget of \$1,175,000, the same as last year. Highlights of the proposed budget include:

- 2 new police cruisers – the Town has been purchasing 2 new police cruisers per year, then retiring 2 cars per year after using them for about 3 years. The Town Manager stated that these retired police cruisers are used in other departments such as Public Works until their full useful life is reached. The number of police vehicles in our fleet is ten (10).
- \$175,000 for a new radio system that coordinates with all Emergency Responders across the nation. Chief LaCrosse has secured a substantial grant to upgrade both the police and fire communications system in order to coordinate with state and federal EMS guidelines.
- \$150,000 for Fire Apparatus Replacement – we will need a new ladder truck in a few years
- \$175,000 for Park and Trail Improvements – primarily the conclusion to improvements at Latham Park
- \$245,000 for School Technology – continuation of the program to buy Chromebooks for all students

The question of road maintenance was broached and addressed by the Town Manager who assured the audience that there is a well-established program to maintain the town roads. It was noted that the poor condition of ‘State roads’ (roads controlled and maintained by the State of Rhode Island) are outside the purview of the town public works department. The ‘State Roads’ in our town are Nayatt, Washington, County, Massasoit, New Meadow, and Sowams. Our state representatives – Joy Hearn, District 66; Jan Malik, District 67 – and our State Senator, Cindy Coyne are responsible to lobby on our behalf to have these State Roads repaired and maintained. It is an unfortunate truth that the ‘squeaky wheel gets the oil’ at the Statehouse and at RIDOT.

The Town Manager made it known again this year that he feels that the School Capital request belongs in the school budget and not in the Capital Budget, which he feels should more appropriately be the Municipal Capital Budget. Geoff explained the rationale of the Appropriations Committee to include all capital – municipal and school – in the same budget. Namely, it forces the taxpayers to prioritize capital needs and enhances transparency. When the schools were denied capital requests, they created their own capital reserve account that became a part of the ‘bottom-line’ school budget and was not subject to oversight by the CIP or Appropriations. Peter feels strongly that inclusion of school capital items such as ‘technology’ diminish the needs of municipal capital. There was general agreement that playgrounds are a town asset and could be considered a capital purchase. There was also skepticism aired that Chromebooks are a capital item

because of their short life and low individual cost. There is a case that this request belongs inside the school operating budget.

Agenda for Next Meeting

The next meeting will address the School budget.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m. by Geoff Grove. The next general meeting will be at 7:00 p.m. on March 22, 2016, in Barrington Senior Center Activity Room.

Minutes submitted by: Geoff Grove