

FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes

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MILLBURY, MASS.

Date: October 21, 2019

Time: 6:30p.m.

Present: Noonan, Kupcinkas, O'Connell, Kennedy, Cooney, Kuphal

Absent: Cofske

Meeting called to order at 6:32 p.m.

Motioned by Kupcinkas, seconded by Noonan to accept the minutes of July 18, 2019 as written.
Unanimous.

Jen O'Connell: We have the Special Town Meeting Warrant to discuss this evening. Since the School Committee is here to discuss two of the Warrant Articles, we will start with them.

Jen O'Connell: Article 6 concerns the athletic fields at the High School on Martin Street. How does everyone feel on this article?

Chris Kennedy: There are many things that are warranted in this Town. This is one of them. We need to look at this Warrant as a whole. I believe it is important to have. Are any of the fields regulation fields?

Pat Mara: No, they are not.

Nicole Cooney: Are all the fields going to be synthetic turf?

Pat Mara: Yes, they are.

Pat Mara, Athletic Director, explained the maintenance needed on different types of fields.

Nicole Cooney: Was there a study on the synthetic fields?

Pat Mara: Many of the Towns that have this type of field have found that the cost to maintain goes down.

Nicole Cooney: Will we be renting out our fields?

Pat Mara: I get calls several times a season asking if we are renting out our fields. If we do rent them out, it would bring in income to help with the cost to upkeep.

Jen O'Connell: What would be the differential in cost if we waited and didn't do the fields with the Shaw Project?

Pat Mara: We cannot fit the baseball, softball and track on the rectangular site. There are safety concerns involved. The booster club has helped us out a lot. With some of the changes that have been made with our fields, the High School will not have a baseball field.

Chris Kennedy: So is this tightly bound to the Shaw Project.

Pat Mara: It is separate from the project. If the Shaw Project did not exist, the fields would not be done.

Chris Kennedy: If the Shaw Project fails, it this dead in the water?

Pat Mara: I don't think so. We do still have to do something with the fields. I don't think they have to be bound together.

Jen Netupski: If the fields do not go through and the Shaw Project does go through, we will be back in May to repair the track. If the Shaw Project fails and the fields go through we would have to go back and look at other options. The building committee was asked to consider the baseball field. The field at Shaw will be the artificial turf. The Shaw Project is not dependent on the fields, but the fields are dependent on the Shaw Project.

Kevin Kuphal: Is the artificial turf going to give us a big savings? People are going to look at all of the articles and see the large dollar amounts.

Pat Mara: We used a substantial amount of our budget and revolving accounts in the fall season last year. We can look into this more specifically.

Jen O'Connell: Article 7 is for the Shaw School. Will there be a dollar amount attached to the article at Town Meeting?

Jayne Davolio: The motion will have a dollar amount.

Chris Kennedy: It is a lot of money. How long do we have to say yeah or nay before we lose the reimbursement? Do we lose the money if we wait a year? Are there any variables that can be done to reduce the cost? How did you arrive at the rate increase?

Greg Myers: The rate per thousand is based on our interest rate. If the vote fails, I have 6 weeks to get back to MSBA with an explanation as to why it failed. If they don't feel it is a good enough reason, they can pull back the reimbursement and give it to another Town. We can appeal it. We looked at fixing the existing facility, but with the problems that we found, the MSBA would not fund it. The original structure was built on a slab. The slab has gotten wet over time and it would have to be replaced. This would not fix the problem. It would continue to come back because of the location of the slab. The brand new structure would cost about the same as the renovation and adding to the existing building. We are locked into what the building committee put together. It is a community investment that we feel we don't want to cut. We did cut the sloped roof. We cut the walkway through the wetlands. This did save money.

Chris Kennedy: What are the ongoing costs after the construction? Will we see a reduction in maintenance and utilities?

Greg Myers: You will see a reduction in both the maintenance and utilities. There is a much more efficient HVAC system. There will be a dehumidifier system rather than an air conditioning system. It will have wax-free floors which will not require the extensive cleaning in the summer. You will see an immediate drop in the utility cost.

Jen O'Connell: Do you anticipate our bond rating to change?

Andrew Vanni: It is hard to increase our bond rating. There is only a certain level that you can get to. I would say that we would stay the same.

Jen O'Connell: At what time does the building become inhabitable? What if this doesn't pass? Can we go back to the State to ask for the money?

Greg Myers: If it doesn't pass this meeting, we will come back to the Town in May. We are doing everything we can to continue to have a safe environment for the students.

Jen Netupski: If we get portable classrooms, we would be shuffling kids around. If the new school is built, we will be moving the 3rd grade out of Elmwood. This would free up 6 classrooms in that school.

Jen O'Connell: How many extra classrooms will there be at the Shaw School?

Jen Netupski: There will be no extra classrooms.

Chris Kennedy: Is the borrowing rate for the Town good?

James Kelly: Yes, it is.

Chris Kennedy: I would have liked to have had the building inspector and the fire department here to explain the sound and safeness of the school. You should have them available to explain this to the people. Will you need new personnel once the school is built?

Jen Netupski: No, we will not.

Greg Myers: We will use the same staff for the 3rd grade as we have now.

Jen O'Connell: This would be hard to sell if we are going to spend this type of money only to add additional teaching staff. People need to understand what will happen if the school does not go through and that we would have to pay 100% of the cost if we were to renovate.

James Kelly: The school would have to provide us the numbers and we could get the calculation.

Kevin Kuphal: The website has a lot of information which would help the people make a decision.

Chris Kennedy: How much have we already invested in this project?

Greg Myers: The feasibility study cost the Town \$550,000. This is ours to keep.

John Adams: My concern is to the taxpayers and the elderly. It is a good project but the school should have some good faith in helping to keep the rate down.

Michael O'Connor: As far as the upcoming retiring debt, the sewer projects are paid by the sewer users only. Years ago everyone paid for the upgrades and new projects.

Kevin Kuphal: There are still some variables on how to calculate the rate.

Andrew Vanni: The best rates would probably be right now. There are different ways that we can borrow. We can do level payments or we can do level principle, in which our principle payments stay constant throughout. We are assuming the rate of 3.75%.

Albert Kupcinskis: It doesn't make sense to renovate a school that you would only get another 5 or 10 years out of.

Bernie Plante: Aren't we going to be charged on a construction loan? We are not borrowing the entire amount right now.

Andrew Vanni: We would be taking out a BAN until we complete the project. Then it would become a long term loan.

Bernie Plante: If we are not borrowing the entire amount, then it shouldn't affect the taxpayers as much as you are saying.

Greg Myers: Last year we came in with a budget increase of 3.37%. We cut supplies and personnel to allow for a larger increase in special education. We are making a good faith effort.

Article 1-McCracken Road Project

James Kelly: This allows the Town to take property easements, pay for engineering cost and design costs. The State pays for the construction.

Jen O'Connell: Why are we not waiting until May with this article?

James Kelley: The State tells us when we have to have things done. We had anticipated revenue from the marijuana facility, but we will not see anything for about 18 months.

Article 2-Stormwater Drainage Project for Downtown

James Kelley: We would be raising and appropriating for this.

Article 3-Sewer line for McCracken Road

James Kelley: This line will be dead-headed and used in the future. This is being done so that after the road is complete, it will not have to be dug up again. This would be transferred from the Sewer Stabilization Fund.

Article 4-Sewer Department Salaries

James Kelley: This would fund a ½ year laborer in anticipation of an upcoming retirement. It will be paid for from the Sewer Stabilization Fund.

Article 5-Operation of the Sewer System

James Kelley: This amount is to correct a mistake in figures from the Annual Town Meeting. It will be coming from the Sewer Enterprise Fund.

Article 8-Retroactive Salaries

James Kelley: This is for retroactive salaries due Town Hall employees when their contract was complete. This will be raised and appropriated.

Article 9-Codify and Re-Codify Zoning Bylaws

James Kelley: This is a continuing project. It is part of the Master Plan. It will be raised and appropriated.

Article 10-FEMA

James Kelley: This will be to install a storage facility for emergency management equipment and to install an emergency generator at the COA. The generator is needed as this is a cooling/warming station for the Town. This will be funded through FEMA.

Article 11-Tree Warden

James Kelley: There are 148 dangerous trees affecting the roadways and wires in town. National Grid is taking down 78 trees. This amount will be used to take about ½ of the serious trees. This will be raised and appropriated.

Article 12-Lease/Purchase agreement for DPW

James Kelley: This will be for a loader, Ford Escape with a plow, chipper and a catch basin truck for the DPW. The chipper is inoperable. The catch basin truck is antiquated. The hydraulics in the loader are so old that we have a hard time finding parts. This will be paid for with a BAN. I will have the DPW Supervisor come in on Monday to explain the reasoning for the 2020 Ford Escape.

Article 13-Remediation and/or removal of asbestos at the Asa Waters Mansion

Chris Naff: The new Director at the Asa Waters Mansion is trying to get the building up to speed. The Building Inspector came and wants the problems taken care of and will issue the occupancy permit if we can show that we are fixing the problem.

James Kelley: There are two locations with asbestos at this time. We are still in the process of testing the rooms. This will be raised and appropriated.

James Kelley: I just want to reiterate that there will be no new positions in next year's budget.

Motioned by Noonan, seconded by Kupcinkas to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. Unanimous.

Albert P. Kupcinkas

Chris Naff

James Kelley

John Noonan

Nicol L. Cooney