

Harwich Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 27th, 2018 at 7:00pm

Harwich Community Center, Rm 3

100 Oak St., Harwich, MA

Members Present: *Jack Brown (Chair); Dana DeCosta; Laurie Gillespie Lee; Mark Ameres; Edward McManus*

Members Absent: *Jon Chorey*

Others Present: *Chris Clark (Town Administrator); Robbin Kelley (Cemetery Administrator); MRSD Superintendent; Carol Coppola (Finance Director); David LeBlanc Deputy Fire Chief, Michael MacAskill (Chair-BOS); Carolyn Carey- Community & Cultural Center; Nancy Scott (School Committee Chair), Katie Iernio; Donna Richardson (Vice chair of school committee);*

I. Call to Order The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Mr. Brown.

II. Topics for Discussion

A. Meet with MRSD Superintendent and discuss FY19 MRSD Budget request.

Discussion of Article 5: Monomoy Regional School Budget:

The Superintendent was not able to attend the meeting and sends his regrets.

The biggest challenge of this budget revolves around contractual obligations of professional staff and fixed costs representing 89% of the budget increase. Meeting the 2% increase would result in cuts to staff and programming which the school committee does not want to do.

The overall budget increase is at 3.4%; however, the school committee notes that pulling health insurance issue out of it, they meet the requested 2%. Health insurance alone represents \$5mil of the budget. The School Committee voted to approve the budget. A \$200k reduction was made. On the municipal side, the health insurance is separated whereas on the school it is not and is included in the general budget.

There is no additional staff added to the school's budget. The minimum contribution from the governor's office led to an increase in the dollar amount reduction. The Committee is working hard to avoid eliminating staff. They went through every line of the budget to reduce the overall budget by \$200k. Excess and Deficiency (E&D) was reduced by \$705k to be at 5%.

Capital exclusions for the cost of the stadium bathrooms and the concession stand were covered by taxation/free cash to be put on the ballot to be passed. Town Administrator notes concern over school choice and what financial impact of the movement of students. Any whiff of “dysfunction” can result in loss of students. Consequence of non-passage include continuing to pay \$5k/year for port-o-potties. If the concession stand isn’t fully operational, fund raising is impacted and could result in fewer funds for the athletic department.

Mr. MacAskill, BOS Chair, notes that he definitely supports the school, but he pushes to look for a complete budget number. He wants to see the big picture of the entire Town inclusive of the new fire dept. He raised the issue of how we can expect to continue to draw kids/families into this community on a budget that’s increasing 5-7%/year?

In response, the school committee wants everyone to know how seriously they take their responsibility to the Town and the students. They reiterate that they look at every line of the budget. The reality of the cost of retirement/insurance continues to increase. Staff = over 50% of the budget and contracts/step increases can’t be changed. The Committee’s task is to make Monomoy #1 through quality academics and curriculum. Monomoy is exactly in the middle in consideration of per student expenditure.

- On a motion by McManus seconded by Gillespie-Lee we move to accept and adopt **Article 5: Monomoy Regional School Budget** at \$25,609,390.00
 - No abstentions, 1 opposed, approved 0-1-4.

B. Meet with Cemetery Administrator Robbin Kelley and discuss Articles 25, 26, & 27

Discussion:

The Committee was presented with a summary sheet on the pet cemetery project including outlines of the proposed building, debt and revenue projects as well a general questions/answers page (see attachment).

The Committee notes there is clearly a huge need for this project and it represents potential needed income generation which will be put in the general fund with first year revenue expected at \$45,500 and a 10% increase in year 2 to \$51,552 based on very conservative usage estimates.

Local veterinarians were contacted. Some are under year-to-year contract, some aren’t. Interest was expressed. It is clear there is a demonstrated public need and interest in this project. There is already a waitlist for pet burial.

- On a motion by Ameres seconded by DeCosta we move to reconsider **Article 26: Construct Pet Cemetery/Fund Equipment** at \$577,950.
 - No abstentions, none opposed, approved unanimously.

On a motion by Ameres seconded by DeCosta we move to accept and adopt **Article 26: Construct Pet Cemetery/Fund Equipment at \$577,950**

a. Approved 4-0-1.

- On a motion by DeCosta seconded by McManus we move to indefinitely postpone **Article 27: Adopt Rules and Regs** for Cemeteries a N/C article
 - No abstentions, one (1) opposed, approved 4-1-0.

C. Discuss remaining Warrant Articles and vote as presented or vote amendments.

Discussion of Article 9: Capital Items from Free Cash

The Committee reviewed the possibility of passing down vehicles to other departments. Administration appreciates the effort but does request the consideration of the full amount of \$35,000 for the Transport Passenger Wagon. Administration is ok removing the \$29,103 for the Natural Resources' request for a Ford F-150 off the list as another vehicle alternative exists.

- On a motion by DeCosta seconded by McManus we move to accept and adopt **Article 9: Capital Items from Free Cash** items 1-9 except Item #4 (Ford F-150 for Natural Resources) BOS at \$234,000.
 - No abstentions, none opposed, approved unanimously.

D. Discuss any remaining articles needing to be voted on, or on any that members want to reconsider.

- On a motion by McManus seconded by DeCosta, we move to accept and adopt **Article 30: Accept Grant for Saquatucket Harbor Project** a N/C article.
 - No abstentions, none opposed, approved unanimously.

Discussion of Marijuana-related articles:

BOS notes that the Town will never be able to recoup the cost of regulating if a pot shop opens in Harwich. This is supported by DeCosta's research into the financial cost/benefit analysis. McManus notes if we're not going to ban them all, then a tweak to the zoning amendment should be considered so that not all "activities" are lumped in together.

- On a motion by DeCosta seconded by McManus we move to reconsider **Articles 34 & 35** bot no-charge article.
 - No abstentions, none opposed, approved unanimously.
- On a motion by DeCosta seconded by Ameres we move to accept **Articles 34 & 35** both no-charge article.
 - No abstentions, none opposed, approved unanimously.

- On a motion by DeCosta seconded by McManus we move to accept and adopt **Article 36: Amend Zoning – Marijuana Temporary Moratorium**, a no-charge article.
 - No abstentions, none opposed, approved unanimously.
- On a motion by McManus, seconded by Gillespie-Lee, we move to reconsider **Article 4: Town Operating Budget**.
 - No abstentions, none opposed, approved unanimously.
- On a motion by McManus seconded by Ameres we move to accept and adopt **Article 4: Town Operating Budget at \$37,070741**
 - No abstentions, 1 opposed, approved 0-1-4.
- On a motion by DeCosta seconded by McManus, we move to reconsider **Article 55: Acquire Property – Judah Eldredge**.
 - No abstentions, none opposed, approved unanimously.
- On a motion by McManus, seconded by Gillespie-Lee, we move to accept and adopt **Article 55: Acquire Property – Judah Eldredge** from CPC funds \$369.000
 - No abstentions, none opposed, approved unanimously.
- On a motion by McManus seconded by Ameres, we move to reconsider **Article 24: Fund Construction of Station II**.
 - No abstentions, 1 opposed, approved 0-1-4.
- On a motion by McManus, seconded by Ameres we move to accept and adopt **Article 24: Fund Construction of Station II** at \$6,050,000.00
 - No abstentions, 1 opposed, approved 0-1-4.

Motion to adjourn by DeCosta seconded by Ameres.

Adjourned at 9:12pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Sarah Manion