



FINANCE COMMITTEE
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GRAFTON, MA

Finance Committee
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, April 13, 2023
7:00PM
Conference Room A
AND
via Zoom

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Chair Mark Haddad. In attendance were Chair Mark Haddad, Vice Chair Greg Marr, Clerk Angelina Correia, Skip Currier (arrived at 7:01pm), Dan Cusher, Victoria Duckworth, Heather McCue, Nick Rioux, and Sue Robbins. Staff in attendance were Town Administrator Evan Brassard, Finance Director Mary Lauria, Assistant Town Administrator William Blake, and Administrative Assistant Amber Diffenderfer.

1. PUBLIC HEARING: Review All Town Meeting Warrant Articles
(Continued from April 12, 2023)

Ms. Robbins made a motion seconded by Mr. Cusher to reopen the public hearing. Motion passed 8 – 0.

Regarding Article 35, Nancie Picconi stated that the Affordable Housing Trust and the Community Preservation Committee were formed around the same time, but the CPC has accomplished far more. She highlighted that the AHT has not provided a unit of affordable housing or helped any resident receive any affordability in Grafton. She spoke about the potential for the AHT to give \$1.9M to GSX, which she noted is the company that pulled out of building Transit Village on Pine Street pushing the Town out of safe harbor. Ms. Picconi also spoke about her interest in forming a new committee to facilitate programs that promote residential growth and retention. She noted that this Citizens' Petition was further prompted by the AHT's proposal to the By-Law Study Committee to add themselves to the Charter, so they cannot be removed by a simple majority.

Mr. Haddad, Mr. Brassard, and Ms. Picconi discussed the logistics of transferring the AHT's funds to the Municipal Stabilization Fund.

Mr. Cusher asked if there was already a group of individuals interested in serving on the proposed new committee. Ms. Picconi stated that the committee would need to be formed with talented individuals with the knowledge to offer these programs.

Mr. Marr explained that the feedback brought forward by the AHT to the Bylaw Study Committee would not change the vote needed to remove them because the Trust document filed with the state requires a two-thirds majority to dissolve. Mr. Haddad noted that the By-Law Study Committee is not making any changes to the Charter.

Ms. Duckworth asked if there had been consideration for forming the new committee without abolishing the existing AHT. Ms. Picconi responded that the AHT does not work with other groups and described the benefits that the new committee could bring. Ms. Duckworth expressed concern about a six-month period in which neither committee exists. Ms. Picconi noted that many other towns do not have an AHT and stated that she is concerned by the GSX money.

a. Planning Department: Article 25, Article 26, Article 27, Article 28, and Article 29

Town Planner Fiona Coughlan presented Article 25 and Article 26 and described their purposes to clarify the Zoning By-Law and correct a numbering error.

Ms. Coughlan stated that Article 27 would add, "The Grafton Common Historic District will be exempt from parking requirements set forth under Section 4.2.2" to Section 4.2.1 and modify the Off-Street Parking Schedule to include the Village Mixed Use Districts, increase their parking spaces required, and create separate lines for Industrial Use and Warehouse Use.

Mr. Currier suggested showing the bylaw changes in bold on the warrant.

Ms. Coughlan stated that Article 28 would remove a description of the Shared Parking requirements for Village Mixed Use and direct readers to the Off-Street Parking Schedule.

Ms. Coughlan presented Article 29 and described the Planning Board's work with Houlden Farm and their abutters in drafting the proposed new section of the Zoning By-Law. She noted that the rezoning request from Houlden Farms would be handled separately by special permit.

Mr. Currier and Mr. Brassard discussed the process for determining the ambient noise level.

Bruce Spinney asked why five- to twenty-acre farms were not considered for this accessory use. Ms. Coughlan spoke about the space required to support this accessory use relative to the farms' principal agricultural use. Mr. Brassard noted that farmer-breweries over five acres are already allowed to hold tastings. Mr. Spinney suggested that farms that do not produce alcohol may want to host events that fall under this accessory use.

Dave Robbins stated that the Planning Board will hold a public hearing to review their submitted articles, and he suspects the acreage threshold in Article 29 will be discussed. He explained that this article would make the rezoning of Houlden Farm unnecessary.

Mr. Cushner and Ms. Diffenderfer left the meeting.

b. Community Preservation Committee: Article 1, Article 20, Article 21, Article 22, Article 23, and Article 24

CPC Treasurer Paul Scarlett stated that Article 1 would make the annual transfer of CPA funds to the Affordable Housing Trust.

Mr. Scarlett presented Article 20 with \$73,700 in each of the estimated revenues and \$358,884 in the Undesignated Reserve.

The Finance Committee did not have any questions about Article 21 or Article 22. Mr. Marr suggested adding them to a consent agenda.

CPC Chair John Stephens and Recreation Director Jen Andersen described the repairs and improvements to Norcross Park that would be made with the funds in Article 23. Ms. Andersen stated that \$170,000 of the almost \$400,000 total project cost will come from other funding sources.

Mr. Stephens explained how the Rental Assistance Program for Grafton Housing Authority Residents and Applicants established by Article 24 would function.

Mr. Stephens and Ms. Duckworth discussed the program's outreach. Housing Authority Chair Jack Kelley stated that all residents would receive a notice about the availability of the program and spoke about the high number of individuals on their waitlist.

Mr. Stephens appreciated Jim Gallagher's work on this program.

2. Recommendations for the Reviewed Town Meeting Warrant Articles

Mr. Currier made a motion seconded by Ms. Duckworth to support the passage of Article 1. Motion passed 8 – 0.

Ms. Robbins made a motion seconded by Mr. Currier to support the passage of Article 20. Motion passed 8 – 0.

Mr. Currier made a motion seconded by Ms. Robbins to support the passage of Article 21 as written. Motion passed 8 – 0.

Mr. Currier made a motion seconded by Mr. Marr to support the passage of Article 22 as written. Motion passed 8 – 0.

Mr. Currier made a motion seconded by Ms. Robbins to support the passage of Article 23 as written. Motion passed 8 – 0.

Mr. Currier made a motion seconded by Mr. Marr to support the passage of Article 24 as written. Motion passed 8 – 0.

Ms. Robbins made a motion seconded by Ms. Duckworth to support Article 25 as presented. Mr. Marr requested that the changes to the bylaw be highlighted in the warrant. Motion passed 8 – 0.

Mr. Marr made a motion seconded by Mr. Currier to support Article 26 as presented. Motion passed 8 – 0.

Mr. Currier made a motion seconded by Mr. Marr to support Article 27 as presented. Motion passed 8 – 0.

Mr. Currier made a motion seconded by Ms. Robbins to support the passage of Article 28 as written. Motion passed 8 – 0.

Ms. Correia made a motion seconded by Ms. Duckworth to approve Article 29 as presented. Motion passed 8 – 0.

Mr. Marr made a motion seconded by Mr. Currier to support Article 31 as written. Ms. Robbins stated that she is opposed to this article because it would take a vote away from her as a citizen. Mr. Marr stated that he is in favor of this article because outside support must be brought in for elections when the Town Clerk is on the ballot, and this is the only full-time position that is elected. Mr. Haddad spoke about his support for this article in the interest of accountability. Mr. Currier stated that he agrees with Ms. Robbins but supports the article. Motion passed 7 – 1 by roll call vote: McCue, Aye; Marr, Aye; Haddad, Aye; Correia, Aye; Duckworth, Aye; Currier, Aye; Robbins, Nay; Rioux, Aye.

Mr. Haddad spoke about his belief that Article 35 is not ready for passage. Ms. Robbins noted that Community Preservation Committees in some towns give significantly more funding to affordable housing. Ms. Correia, Ms. Duckworth, and Ms. McCue highlighted that more evidence of the Trust's characteristics presented this evening would be needed. Mr. Brassard spoke about the article transferring all funds and assets to the Municipal Stabilization Fund. The Finance Committee discussed their interest in learning more about the proposed new committee.

Ms. Robbins made a motion seconded by Mr. Currier to oppose Article 35 as written. Motion passed 8 – 0.

Mr. Brassard highlighted a change to Appendix A of the warrant to remove Capital Articles from the Compressed Budget.

Mr. Marr made a motion seconded by Ms. Duckworth to close the public hearing. Motion passed 8 – 0.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned by Mr. Haddad at 8:21pm.

The Finance Committee's meeting materials are available at: <https://www.grafton-ma.gov/AgendaCenter/Finance-Committee-6>

A recording of this meeting is available at: <https://youtu.be/PfCD-qMDyXA>