

Finance Committee
April 6, 2021
Remote

With a quorum present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 7:32.

Finance Committee members present: Janice Clements-Skelton, Michael Dougherty, Joseph Bourque, Jamie Fay, Rob White, Michael Schaaf, Christopher Doucette

1. Citizens Queries - Janice Clements-Skelton

- There is an open chat room for any citizen's queries.
- No citizen's queries.

2. Acceptance of Finance Committee Minutes - Janice Clements-Skelton

- Moved to the end of the meeting

Warrant hearing number 3 opened at 7:34pm

1. Article 29 Citizen Petition - Amend General Bylaws - Chapter 35 (Requirement for Online Access to Recordings & Transcripts)

Ed Marsh-

Mr. Marsh was asked at the previous warrant meeting to gather information about the cost of having the town meetings recorded. Mr. Marsh found that maintaining Zoom, with cloud recording- would need ten license which would cost 2,000 per year. Also, the use of Otter for transcripts, which integrates with zoom for the meetings for 5 licenses which would be about 1,000 per year for about a total of 3,000 a year. Also needed would be camera equipment, which you would need about 5 based on the set up. Along with the cost of cameras would be 5 for 1,000 dollars and microphones 2 for 150 dollars.

Questions/ Comments:

Janice Clements-Skelton: What about accuracy of Otter? Any experience with acronyms in Otter?

- Mr. Marsh explained that while Otter is good, it is not always 100% accurate. With very few exceptions, it consistently has the ability to understand when one person stops speaking and another starts. There are errors, but providing documents informing individuals that it is an AI transcription and not a human transcription. Some, but you can define terms and set it so it will recognize terms. Zoom has one embedded as well.

Michael Schaaf: Tony, have you reviewed this budget? We would need staff time to help carry this out? Have someone there as well?

- Tony said that he has not but is familiar with the cost of Zoom, which the town currently has a 2,000-dollar contract with the ten licenses, and Otter. Also doesn't agree that it will be as simple as setting individuals up with zoom and cameras because of the hard time just getting people logged into the meetings, let alone adding more to the situation. As for staff time there would need to be someone because some groups may struggle, and is unable to see how this would work without lots of training.

Michael Dougherty: One interesting component would be the Multilanguage aspect, where English isn't a first language it might make things easier, along with being a benefit.

Janice Clements-Skelton: Where we aren't using our own, and using the towns, Zoom is used differently. Using my own it's as simple, but the towns it multiple steps.

- Mr. Marsh answers that training would be a one-time training consisting of connecting the devices, understand the devices, where to place the microphone and

cameras. He suggested making a quick sketch, so everyone knows where the camera/ microphone goes to make sure there is good coverage.

Janice Clements-Skelton: Might we be open to postponing this article, tabling it which doesn't postpone the article, we don't vote on it at town meeting. Suggesting a trial run with a smaller committee(s) for a few months, to gain a better understanding, and to see if it will work. If yes, it could be reintroduced at the fall town meeting.

- Mr. Marsh disagrees with the idea because if the one or two committees uses the technology and both don't like it will torpedo the experiment.

Michael Dougherty Agrees with Mr. Marsh that this is the future of meetings, in one way or another. He would like the article to give more transparency and platforms for the public to be interactive with town government. If the article is postponed, then having a committee experiment, and following up in the fall would be the best outcome.

Joseph Bourque There isn't a good handle on the actual cost of this. The logistics, the types of administrative and tech support that would be involved. Any concerns with open meetings laws, and financial information. I would like feedback for the IT director, then make a decision after that.

Michael Schaaf: Are there any other communities doing this currently?

- Mr. Marsh did not research other communities. Also, Tony looked at other communities and, no one is looking into doing this right now.

Motion:

Robert White: Move to support

Michael Dougherty: 2nd the motion

5-3 motion fails

Article 16: Planning - Inclusionary Housing Amendments

Keith Anderson- Planning board chair

Ethan Parsons

*Planning board voted in favor

*Select board was in favor

One change made, under part 2, there was a missing reference for open space preservation zoning project to the planning board regulation for establishing the regulatory housing payment in-lieu fee. That was the only change to this article.

Questions/Comments:

Jamie Fay: The fee schedule went all the way down to one unit? The fee structure is no so burdensome for a single unit project which was done intentionally. It applies to a single unit project and continue to apply, we don't see to many single unit projects what we see are a few unit projects but is someone already has a multiunit project and they want to create a new condo, the fee would be about 27,000 which is a 10,000 dollar increase from what we have today.

- Yes, if one has mixed use or multifamily building and they want to add a unit it subject to a special permit and that unit is in fact included in the inclusionary housing requirements. It goes all the way down to one unit.

Michael Schaaf: The fee for rentals are 20,000. Why?

- Only 20,000 dollars for the footnote 11 for units, otherwise it's still 10,000. The cost of providing an affordable unit is 70,000. For each unit going up to 7 one has to provide a factor on a whole which results in a payment of 10,000 because those 70,000 costs. The non-footnote 11-unit fee have always been higher than the other footnote fees

Michael Schaaf pointed out previously there was an error in section 2i, was there an adjustment made?

- No adjustments were made, not convinced there is an error but it hasn't been reviewed.

Michael Schaaf proposed this article not to go in front of town meeting because of the error.

- Mr. Anderson asked what the error is, and said the language has been in that section as of 2004

Michael Schaaf answered that if calculated, an affordable rent according to the area medium income and with the income group you're suggesting. Then calculate how much you spend on housing and 30% of the low-income range you select

- Mr. Parsons answered that it has only been used this once as an ownership unit, if there is an error it will not impact anything between now and the fall town meeting.

It was asked if Michael Schaaf was recommending FINCOM oppose or postpone this article while the error is explored. Michael Schaaf said that a small error is tangible, but it says two different things in the article. Mr. Parsons mention that this was deliberate in 2004-05 when it was changed but he will talk with the housing partnership and address it.

Janice Clements-Skelton asked if this was deliberate what would be gained by having two different formulas? What would be gained it would a high-level eligibility test. It assures whoever occupies one of these affordable units will not have a household cost burden.

Motion:

Christopher Doucette: Move to support

Joseph Bourque: 2nd

8-0 passes in favor

Article 17: Planning - Great Estate Preservation Development (GEPD) Amendments

Keith Anderson- Planning board chair

Ethan Parsons- Director of Planning & Development

Don Greenough- Ora, Inc. lawyer

*Planning board voted in favor

*Select board voted in favor

Allows 55 Waldingfield Road to become a great estate, adding a few conditions that need to be met like the mansion must be built before 1948, must have 12,500 sq. ft of floor area minimum.

We've done this to avoid consequences for other properties that will get mixed into the fold.

Changes also address floor build out, restriction on land, it has the owned by the applicant which will determine the area build out.

Questions/comments:

Janice Clements-Skelton relays a citizen question from two individuals who had the same question:

Why is this not just spot zoning?

- It's amending a provision in the bylaw that pertains to more the one lot. It pertains to Turner Hill, New England Bio labs & Castle Hill. It is not specifically for one property.

Janice Clements-Skelton asked if this pull in any other properties?

- Probably not, the only questionable property would the Winthrop estate, but the house on the property dose not meet the definition of a "great estate"

Jamie Fay asked if an adjustment was made on the provisions in this article for allowable floor area for future development, last time it was 75,000 to 150,000 of additional sq ft that could be developed. What is your calculation on the revised language?

- It's still a range because we didn't know how many buildable lots under a sub division. We believe it is between 70-130,00 at the highest at the max floor area can exceed 8% of the lot.
- Mr. Greenough address Jamie Fay's question- about the original bylaw would have allowed. It would have allowed a build out of 277,000 sq. ft. the by law tonight accounts for the wetlands on the property which is 129,000 sq. ft it is a reduction. The last hearing

the reductions were already considered, and the change had not been voted on by the planning board and we didn't have a good calculation of the wetlands.

*Traffic has been the number one concern being a rural road

Michael Dougherty asked that while this zoning change is not zoning specific but is this the only that thing that qualifies for a change?

- No, this site is the only site that is being targeted for this change.

Robert White asked what could a developer do, either by right or special permit, if we were going to use the great estate bylaw?

- We could anticipate it would be attractive for housing, single family development or a cluster of sub-divisions. Other uses could be protected uses like religious institutions or day care centers, agricultural uses or just bought it for a hobby horse farm.

Motion to support:

Michael Schaaf: Move to support

Joseph Bourque: 2nd

8-0 passes in favor

Article 18: Planning - Water Demand Minimization Amendments

Jim Engel- Water/Wastewater subcommittee chair

Vicki Halmen- Water & Wastewater director

Ethan Parsons- Director of Planning & Development

Mr. Engel reviewed the plan for WUMP: The town received a water natural growth report in May of 2020, which is a set for actions of water growth reports on how to reduce the use of water in town which leads to a petition for an WUMP (water use mitigation program) program. October 2020 the town adoption of interim WUMP, until a permanent one can be put in place.

The interim WUMP outlines the following:

- Residential projects adding one or more bedrooms
- All non-resident projects

Fees are:

- Residential: 1500 sq. ft/3 bedroom
- Non- residential 13.50/Gallons-per-day

Exemptions are:

- Ipswich public school, municipal projects
- Dwellings added to subsidized housing

Revenue:

- Added into a WUMP reserve account
- Used for Water reduction programs and WUMP Administrative costs

The proposed permanent WUMP:

All new and existing customers who are permitted, any active places, and or new or increased demands on the water system

Fees:

- 50\$ for the application fee
- 100\$ gallon per day for increased use

Exemptions:

- None

Revenues:

- Same as the interim WUAMP

Modifications:

- By appeals to water commissioner

Questions/comments:

Janice Clements-Skelton asked how does the town avoid the catch 22 of putting a WUMP in place with the intent of reducing water usage? We are looking to collect less revenue, but we would add a full-time position and, how will they offset each other? What will this do to the municipal and school budgets?

- Mr. Engel answered that on a year to year basis is how successful these efforts can be, we reduce consumption with projects but become a leader in water reduction. For the school budget it would only be affected if a new school is built, and if they ‘abandon’ the old school. That water would credit towards the use at the new facility.

Michael Dougherty answered that all though he was the only no vote at the water waste meeting, the original WUMP it had great intended, but at the end of the meeting was the final product was a complete overreach. He had issues with both the inclusion part and the fee part. He reminded everyone that the original goal of the WUMP is to make sure that any large developments are held accountable for the water demand that will be added onto the system, and it would not be fair for John and Jill citizen to have to pay the same fees.

- Mr. Engel answered that it’s a work in progress, there is nothing set in stone yet for fees Jamie Fay said that regardless of the cost of the fee for the administrator, on the revenue side he was shocked, last year it was 1200 dollars, and said that we need to be realistic about the real revenue of this.

Janice Clements-Skelton mentioned that this is just a draft but when would more be seen on this plan?

- Mr. Engel said early May

Ethan Parsons- (Director of Planning & Development) add that the planning board and department are helping to move this forward, along with trying to make advances in water conservation. When this was started to be discussed, there was some consideration of zoning bylaw changes and what was decided was the effort that Mr. Engel was speaking about was fits as a regulation as opposed to a zoning by law. The planning board would like to insert references to the WUMP regulations, so the planning board has more give on reviewing applications.

Michael Schaaf asked if this would enable the planning board to regulate it if a new lawn as installed? The size, any types of plantings or watering lawns. This would be a major misuse of water.

- Mr. Parsons answered that the planning board would look at each case on a case by case basis. There are already some circumstances for limiting lawns, irrigation and planting. WUMP is about offsets and the planning board with encoring offsets.

Janice Clements-Skelton asked Mr. Parsons if the conservation board had weighted in on this because of conflicting priorities.

- Mr. Parsons said that he had not talked to the conservation board yet, but it’s something that should be done before town meeting.

Motion:

Jamie Fay: move to support

Joseph Bourque: 2nd

5-2 to support

Article 19: Planning - Energy Efficient Amendments

Ethan Parsons- Director of Planning & Development

*Select board voted 3-2 in opposition

This has changed, the planning board has decided to strike the proposed language for heating pumps within setbacks. The planning board left it like this because it was unnecessary at this time, because the problem it’s trying to solve isn’t that great. What it would do now is insert some language in the general purpose of general zoning bylaw that talks about aggressively

reducing fossil fuels and adopting renewable energy sources. Also, this allows for up to 1 foot encroachment into a side or rear of any building in any part of two provided infrastructures of that building which uses both advance energy conservation measures and advance envelope building design.

Motion;

Michael Dougherty: Move to supports- withdraws Motion

Michael Schaaf: Moves to support

Jamie Fay: 2nd

6-2 opposes, motion fails

Article 14: Water Infrastructure Upgrades (Town Hill Water Tank)

Vicki Halmen- Water & Wastewater director

Language was added to the article for the motion;

*Select board voted in favor of the motion.

Questions or comments:

Jamie Fay: what is the project? This isn't a defined project or design.

- Ms. Halmen answered that the Town hill tank is under design right now and should be done by October and will be ready to bid on immediately. It would allow the town to have competitive bids because we would have the funding.

Jamie Fay adds that he thinks we have an obligation to hold our town employees to a higher standard in terms of presenting warrant articles for bond authorization. There should be a plan in place for what the money is being spend on. I feel like this should be moved to fall town meeting, because it's not a crisis.

Robert white asks if it will be designed by October and bid-on, when will this be happening? The spring? What is the harm in moving this to the fall? Is there money to do the design?

- Ms. Halmen answered it's a critical component to the water system and it needs to be done. They are about 110,000 dollars short to finalize the design without addition authorization. So, delaying it would have to change the operating budget.

Mr. Engel asked how much money would be needed between now and then to get this done so we don't lose any time? Ms. Halmen answered bout 110,000 dollars

It was then asked if the Finance Committee would consider reducing the authorization for the 4 million to the money that Ms. Halmen needs to get to town meeting to a number of 250,000 dollars to get the project in shape.

Jamie Fay: It gets us the answer we want, and I would support this. What would the number be to get you through to town meeting? Which Ms. Halmen answered 200,000 to be safe

Motion:

Jamie Fay moves to supports article 14 in the of amount of 200,000 for design, permitting and preconstruction services improvements the Town hill water tank.

Walter Hartford :2nd

The amendment through the Motion passes 8-0

Article 15: Wastewater Infrastructure Upgrades and Design Work

Vicki Halmen- Water & Wastewater director

New language was added, and relocation aspect was removed. Just the designing of the pump station

Questions/Comments:

- None

Michael Dougherty: Moved

Joseph Bourque:2nd

Moton passes 8-0

Article 7 and 8 will be voted on at Bean Counting

Warrant Hearing Closed at 10:15pm

New/Other Business:

1. Minutes:

We have some edits to some of them, we have minutes from February 2, 2021, have people reviewed these?

Moton to accept:

Michael Dougherty: Move the Motion

Joseph Bourque: 2nd

Moton passes 8-0

3/23/21 Minutes:

- Feedback from Jamie Fay and Joseph Bourque with some edits.

3/25/21 Minutes:

- Feedback from Jamie Fay

Revisit minutes at Bean counting:

2. Janice Clements-Skeleton:

On the matter of town meeting, I will not be attending on May 15 2021.

3. With all but two articles now we can start the written-assignments. Those who have last year's report feel free to use that as a guide. Just send me your written piece.

4. Bean counting agenda posted by Thursday. If you have-suggestions or requests, please let me know.

Motion to close

Robert White: Moves Motion

Michael Dougherty:2nd

Moton passes 8-0

Meeting ended at 10:28pm