

Finance Committee
Minutes of February 25, 2016
FINAL

The Finance Committee met Wednesday evening on February 25, 2017, at the Town House Hearing Room, Concord, Massachusetts. Notice of the meeting was duly filed with the Town Clerk, Town of Concord, Massachusetts.

Members present: Terri Ackerman, Richard Giles, Mark Garvey, Richard Jamison, Linda Miller, Pat Nelson, Karle Packard, Scott Randall, Wendy Rovelli, June Rzepczynski, Tom Tarpey, and Triveni Upadhyay.

Members absent: Daniel Cassidy, Paul McGinn, and Phil Swain.

Also present: Ardis Bordman; Tony Logalbo, Finance Director; and Janet Rothrock, Recorder.

Chairman Giles called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and thanked CCTV for recording the meeting.

1. Approval of Minutes (as available): The minutes of January 27 were accepted with one edit and the minutes of the February 1 hearing and the February 3 hearing minutes were accepted with no edits.

2. Correspondence: There was an email about the recent votes on an amended Regional Agreement and continuing membership in the Minuteman Regional Technical High School district. Six towns have voted to leave the Minuteman district as of July 1, 2017.

3. Chair's Report: Mr. Giles reported on the Chair's Breakfast on the 17th and the Select Board (SB) meeting of the 22nd. The Concord-Carlisle Regional High School (CCHS) Principal search has started. The Tax Relief Fund was discussed. The Board of Health is concerned that Article 45, which would ban the use of polystyrene for food service in Concord, would be difficult to implement for schools and local businesses. The SB will set up an energy task force.

The SB voted to recommend affirmative action on Article 8, Home Rule Petition to Establish a Concord Senior Means-Tested Property Tax Exemption. The SB voted to recommend affirmative action on Article 18, Minuteman Building Project because Concord's continued membership in the district preserves a valuable option, despite the uncertainties about the allocation of capital costs among a 10-member district. The SB voted to recommend no action on Articles 29, Removal of Parking Meters and no action on Article 30, Snow Removal from Sidewalks.

Mr. Giles named the members of the Finance Committee (FC) Nominating Committee: Mr. Giles, Ms. Nelson and Ms. Rovelli.

4. Observer Reports:

Schools – Ms. Miller reported that the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District (CCRS) recently issued a bond for the remaining high school building project costs.

The rating agency, Moody's Investors Service, maintained CCRSD's Aaa rating. So far the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has reimbursed \$25,800,000 of the anticipated \$27,900,000. The superintendent search has begun with an RFP for a search firm; of the four bids returned, two have been deemed qualified. At the March 8 School Committee (SC) meeting, the final choice will be made. The SC has deferred work on the strategic plan and has turned its attention to the high school principal search instead.

There will be another Concord Teacher Association (CTA) negotiation session on March 24th. Some salary issues remain, mainly achieving parity with the 9-12 teachers. The SC is exploring possible ways to do this within the budget constraints. Non-salary issues remain. If no agreement can be reached, the matter goes to arbitration. There was a previous period of time without a contract several years ago.

The SC approved allocation of \$3900 for the superintendent and \$3900 for a teacher to attend a conference at the Hague on the subject of an international certificate. There was no discussion and it is not known how many students this certificate affects.

Audit Committee – Ms. Rzepczynski reported that the committee is reviewing its original Charge from the Select Board, considering whether any changes should be recommended to the Select Board.

5. Public Hearing Preparations: Mr. Giles said that the FC will consider Articles 44 and 51-56 in a short FC meeting that will convene after the Enterprise Budgets Hearing on Monday, February 29.

6. Finance Committee Report - Article Recommendations:

Article 8, Home Rule Petition to Establish a Concord Senior Means-Tested Property Tax Exemption - The FC explored the pros and cons of the article. The Home Rule petition would ask the state legislature to enact a statute solely applicable to Concord modelled on a similar statute that applies to Sudbury. If the state legislature does so, the measure would return to Concord Town Meeting for approval and then would also be subject to a town-wide ballot vote before it could take effect. Mr. Logalbo pointed out that the tax levy would increase if this proposal is implemented; a 1% surcharge would result in an additional \$100 on the median \$10,000 tax bill. Some members commented that it might be cost effective to implement the proposal and keep older folks in town who do not have children. The Home Rule petition includes a sunset provision so if it doesn't work well it would expire automatically. The Board of Assessors believes it can manage the article. The Finance Director felt, however, that there might be an impact on the compensation of assessing division staff who would take on this new assignment, particularly as the responsibility to measure wealth of applicants beyond current income is ill-defined.

The motion was made by Ms. Nelson, seconded by Ms. Rzepczynski, and voted unanimously in favor by the Finance Committee members. The Finance Committee recommends that Town Meeting take **affirmative action on Article 8**. Mr. Upadhyay will comment on the article at Town Meeting.

Article 13, Concord-Carlisle Regional High School Budget – the FC deferred discussion until the following Monday when the Deputy Superintendent and the Finance Director will have arrived at final FY17 budget and assessment numbers.

Article 18, Minuteman Building Project Approval - Ten of the 16 district members voted to retain membership in the new district agreement which takes effect July 1, 2017. The anticipated lifetime of the new building is 50 years. Concord has enrolled as few as 7 and as many as 24 students at Minuteman over the past few years. Membership in the district guarantees that Concord can continue to send students in the coming years. Concord's share of debt service, projected for FY2020 using current enrollment numbers, is expected to add approximately \$30 per year to the median tax bill.

The motion was made by Mr. Randall, seconded by Ms. Rovelli, and voted unanimously in favor by the Finance Committee members. The Finance Committee recommends that Town Meeting take **affirmative action on Article 18**.

Article 45, By Petition – Bylaw Prohibiting Polystyrene in Food Service Ware - The Board of Health is concerned that the article's enforcement will burden the Town and cost businesses and schools that must find replacement materials. The FC decided to hear from the Board of Health before voting a position.

Article 47, By Petition – Three-Year Moratorium on the Installation of Synthetic Turf on Town Land – The FC takes no position on this article.

Article 48, By Petition – Work to Reduce the Sale and Use of Neonicotinoid Pesticides - This may now be a resolution rather than a bylaw.

7. Finance Director's Report: Mr. Logalbo reminded the FC that they will get the Enterprise section of the Budget Book electronically and will have the weekend to review it in order to formulate questions for the February 29th public hearing.

8. Committee questions/comments: Mr. Jamison said that he would like to have the Finance Committee Report include photos and a short biographical piece on each of the FC members. This will be on a future agenda.

9. Citizen questions/comments: Ms. Bordman pointed out that if there were many Concord SPED students who could not be served by the Minutemen School they would have to go elsewhere and might cost more.

10. Other Business:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Karle Packard, Clerk