

Advisory Committee
October 3, 2012
Felix Juliani Meeting Room, Town Hall

David Murphy called the meeting of the Wellesley Advisory Committee to order at 7:30 p.m. Those present included Robert Capozzi, Thomas Engels, Becky Epstein, Marjorie Freiman, Ann-Marie Gross, Laura Hockett, John Hussey, Catherine Johnson, Lucy Kapples, Phillip Licari, Andy Patten, Ann Rappaport, DebRobi and Rich Woerner.

Citizen Speak

None

Update on 900 Worcester

Andy Wroebel, 900 Worcester Committee member, as well as Barbara Searle and Katherine L. Babson, Jr., Board of Selectmen, updated the Advisory Committee on the status of the property. Several subcommittees were formed after approval was given at the June 2012 Special Town Meeting to acquire the property. Since that time, research has been done to review the site for recreational uses, a pool, rink and soccerfield. Due diligence has been done on a portion of the property, but further studies have been postponed until after an appeal filed by parishioners with the Vatican has been resolved. The committee hopes to be able to come to the 2013 annual Town Meeting with a motion to get permitting approval and start work on the field. There has been an ongoing process to engage with all Town boards, as well as the public, to secure input for the best uses of the property. The Council on Aging has requested a senior center be considered if current plans for the center's proposed site are not viable. The Basketball Association also requested gym space. Public input has been sparse even though a notice was placed in the newspaper in advance of all public meetings. A decision is scheduled for the end of October. Questions were taken from the Advisory Committee and discussion followed.

Update on the Senior Center

Terri Tsagaris, Chair of the Board of Selectmen presented the update. The senior center will be called the Tolles-Parsons Center, and a planning commission has begun to meet to draft a mission statement, establish programs to be offered as well as to decide how the population will be served. The center will collaborate with other Boards of the Town to ensure there will not be any duplication of services. An advisory group consisting of citizens from all demographics will review the model and advise if any changes are needed to the final plan. The goal is to present to the Board of Selectmen in January or February.

Update on the Wellesley Hills Branch Library Chimney Repair

Ellen Gibbs, Board of Selectmen and Ann Howley, Library Board of Trustee gave the update. The Board of Selectmen gave approval for funding of the repair and work was begun on the chimney, but had to be

halted due to crumbling of the mortar and stone. The chimney needed to be stabilized before work could continue on the project. This required an expenditure of \$25,000 for labor and \$5,000 for design. In January 2012, the cost for stabilization was approved and given from the Advisory Reserve Fund. The stabilization work was completed in late spring. The Permanent Building Committee is now overseeing this project. New estimates on the repair of the chimney now are at \$127,000 which includes \$11,700 for design plans, \$93,000 for construction and a 15% contingency fee. An envelope study is now being held for estimates. The property is on the historic register and research is being done to see if there is any funding available through those channels. The fireplace is also in need of repair, but it was advised that to restore the fireplace to working condition would be unsafe for a library environment. Questions and discussion followed.

Pension and OPEB Review

Hans Larsen, Executive Director of General Government, gave the report. Hans described the steps that are being taken to address the problem of pension underfunding. The goal is to have fully funded pensions by the year 2030. Employees who are newly hired are now contributing more to their retirement pensions than employees hired in previous years. Town employees do not contribute to social security.

Hans also reviewed the outlook for health insurance costs, as well as the funding of OPEB, other post-employment benefits, which include health care for retirees. Employees who were on the more expensive legacy plans are being directed to more cost effective group health insurance. Retired employees who are eligible for Medicare are being transitioned into that Federal program, which has helped the budget. Questions and discussion followed.

Discussion of Budget Guidelines

David Murphy, Chair, presented the overview of the FY14 budget. Union contracts will be up for renewal in July and will have to be negotiated. The Town has underinvested in many of the municipal buildings over the last 15 years and there is an unfunded liability for those costs. On the positive side, there has been marked improvement in financial planning in all departments and divisions, as well as more transparency. Overall, the 2014 fiscal year will require continued restraint in spending. The Board of Selectmen would prefer to avoid an override in FY14, if possible. Discussion followed.

Liaison Reports

David Murphy, Chair announced an Association of Town Finance Committee meeting on October 20th at Franklin High School from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. with various seminars being presented.

He also asked for volunteers for the Wellesley Spelling Bee to be given on November 8th. A team of 3 participants is needed.

The Advisory Committee meeting next week will begin at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 9:21 p.m.