

Board of Selectmen meeting: November 25, 2013
Present: Babson, Searle, Gibbs, Tsagaris, McCauley
Also present: Larsen, Jop, Connolly, Robinson, Williams

Warrants: None

Meeting called to order: 7:00 pm.

Ms. Babson congratulated the Wellesley Fifth Grade Youth Football team on winning the regional championship. The team is heading to Florida to compete in the national championship. She also reported that the Wellesley/Needham football game will take place on Thanksgiving Day. She reminded residents that the RDF will be open for one more Sunday for yard waste disposal. Ms. Babson reviewed the dates for the upcoming precinct meetings for Town Meeting members. She encouraged everyone to take a drive through town and view the lights that were placed on poles and requested feedback from the public. Ms. Babson concluded the announcements by noting the details of walks being hosted by the Fuller Brook Park Committee on Saturday and Sunday.

1. Citizen Speak

None.

2. Executive Director's update

Minutes

The Board voted (5-0) to approve the minutes of the October 28, 2013, November 5, 2013, November 12, 2013 and November 21, 2013 Board of Selectmen's meetings.

FY15 Facilities Maintenance Department Capital Request

Mr. Larsen reviewed the one change made since the November 12th presentation. Specifically, the funds to be requested for design of a new office for the Facilities Maintenance Department have been deferred until FY16.

The Board voted (5-0) to approve the FY15 capital plan for facilities under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen, as presented by the Facilities Maintenance Director on November 12, 2013.

New Years Eve Liquor service extensions

The Board voted (5-0) to approve the requests from: Blue Ginger located at 583 Washington Street, and Italo-American Educational Club located at 75 Pleasant Street, for the extension of liquor service for one hour from 12:00 am to 1:00 am on January 1, 2014.

Free Cash issues

Mr. Larsen explained that the budget guidelines for FY15 contemplate a 1.75% increase in Personal Services and the use of \$2.25 million of Free Cash. Mr. Larsen distributed and reviewed a projection of Free Cash sources and use in FY14. The projection shows beginning balances of \$10.9 million in Free Cash and slightly over \$3 million in the Stabilization Fund. This represents 11.35% of FY14 revenue. The largest anticipated use of Free Cash in FY14 is the appropriation of design funds for the Fiske and

Schofield renovation projects and study money for Hardy, Hunnewell, Upham, and the Middle School at \$2.597 million. Mr. Larsen briefly reviewed the other projected uses. Based on these projections and assuming \$500,000 in Free Cash is generated, approximately \$1.3 million of Free Cash would be available to help fund the FY15 budget while allowing the Town to maintain a reserve balance of 8% at the end of the year. Ms. Searle questioned whether this assumed any turn back from the Schools? Mr. Larsen noted that the projection makes no specific assumption in this regard. He expects to do better on turn back, but won't know until further into the year. To provide further budget flexibility, Mr. Larsen proposed funding a portion of the Fiske and Schofield design costs with short-term debt, as opposed to fully funding it with Free Cash. He is seeking feedback from the Board before proceeding with this change. Ms. Babson believes this is a good idea. The other members of the Board concurred with Ms. Babson. After further discussion, it was agreed that the staff should give more thought to specifically how much of the Fiske and Schofield design cost should be funded with short-term debt. Ms. Babson requested that the Board receive a new schedule in time for a vote on this matter Monday evening.

3. FY15 Shared Costs Budget

Marc Waldman, Treasurer, joined the Board. Mr. Waldman reviewed the shared costs budget and observed that he has stayed within the Board's guidelines. The rate setting meeting for the West Suburban Health Group (WSHG) will not be held until the first week of February. Accordingly, the health insurance portion of the Group Insurance budget is very preliminary. The health insurance budget is based on current enrollment. If overrides are sought for additional staffing Mr. Waldman understands that there will also be a supplementary provision for incremental group insurance costs (i.e., \$20,000 per additional staff person). Mr. Larsen explained that Medicare Part D drug subsidies have previously been accounted for outside of the WSHG premium rate structure. Going forward, these subsidies will be accounted for within the rates. Mr. Waldman also reported that the WSHG has made a decision to eliminate the legacy plans (i.e., the pre-Rate Saver plans) effective July 1, 2014. Mr. Waldman reviewed the Workers Compensation budget and explained that this is more of a financial model than a budget. The Town has previously suffered from year to year volatility in the Workers Compensation budget. This year he is budgeting a slightly higher amount than the Town's historic reserve approach would call for, in a conscious effort to smooth out some of this volatility. He also mentioned that the Retirement Board is moving forward with the transfer of the Town's OPEB (Other Post Employment Benefits) assets to the state.

4. Tax Classification Hearing

Arthur Garrity, Stephen Mahoney and David Livingston from the Board of Assessors, and Donna McCabe, Chief Assessor joined the Board. Ms. Gibbs reviewed the Selectmen's role in determining the tax classification each year. She explained that a change in the tax classification would not change the levy. Rather, it would change the share of the total levy to be borne by each class. New growth values have been approved by the Department of Revenue and the FY14 tax rate will be voted next Monday. Mr. Mahoney began by reviewing the assessment profile, and then continued by reviewing the Town's history in terms of assessed values and tax rates. He noted that 1982 was the year in which the Town had the highest relative percentage of commercial property value. He further reviewed the evolution of total property value by type and observed that the Town has not seen a significant change in the utilization of personal exemptions. In response to a question from Ms. Gibbs, Ms. McCabe summarized the various outreach methods used to advertise the various exemptions available to property owners. Mr. Mahoney reviewed the evolution of the Levy Limit/Levy Ceiling. He noted that last year \$97,401,131 was raised, and that the level of new growth has decreased slightly. He reviewed the budgeted sources of funds and the fiscal year 2014 tax rate calculation, assuming a single tax rate. He also reviewed a reconciliation of the FY2013 to FY2014 tax rates, again assuming the Town maintains a

single tax rate. He discussed the tax rate options and the potential implications on the different classes of properties. Ms. McCabe noted there are 110 communities that have a split tax rate, and this figure has not changed substantially during the past year.

Mr. Garrity reviewed the total single family values, as well as the mean single family values. He discussed the residential tax rate history and the mean single family tax bill history

Following further questions and answers, **the Board voted (5-0) to continue the Tax Classification hearing to December 2, 2013 at 7:10pm.**

5. Tolles Parsons Center

Ms. Tsagaris reported that last week a meeting was held with the PBC, at which it was tentatively determined, the Selectmen and PBC should call a second Special Town Meeting on December 9, 2013 to request additional planning funds, to develop changes to the plans for the project responsive to the Planning Board's recent decision. Preliminary numbers for this request were reviewed with the Advisory Committee on Saturday. The team understands there are four primary issues:

- Storm water drainage – they would like mitigation that's more sustainable;
- Atwood Street – is this an impacted roadway?
- Traffic and parking on Washington St. – they are concerned with extent to which the Senior center would impact traffic on Washington Street,
- The proposed signalization and crosswalk – they are concerned that 2 crosswalks and different signalization might be confusing.

In an attempt to address these concerns, the PBC met with the Owners Project Manger to see what it would cost to address these issues and bring a revised proposal back to the Planning Board. Ms. Tsagaris reviewed the expenses to-date on this project as well as a breakdown of the additional request. The Planning Board has refused to enter into a TDRT with the Town and would prefer that the proponents come back and update them at their regularly scheduled meetings. Ms. Tsagaris noted that the Planning Board has made it clear that this further work does not guarantee that the project will be approved.

The Board voted (5-0) to approve the draft motion language for Article 2 for the 8:00pm December 9, 2013 Special Town Meeting.

Marjorie Freiman, Advisory Chair, joined the Board to report on the Advisory Committee's response. The Advisory Committee was updated last Wednesday regarding Article 2 for Special Town Meeting 2. Several seniors addressed Advisory, expressing their strong report. The Permanent Building Committee met with them on Thursday to share preliminary numbers. Advisory felt that the presentation was as open and transparent as possible and they believe they have been provided with as much information as possible. They recognize that building a standalone senior center is a high priority for the Town. While \$300,000 is a significant amount of money, they believe the funds will be spent carefully and that there is a good reason to move forward. Advisory did not take an official vote as the Board of Selectmen had not voted yet. In a straw vote, the Advisory Committee voted 12-0 in support of this Article.

Ms. Tsagaris reviewed the next steps, which will be to present the request for additional planning funds to Town Meeting.

6. Retail Sale of beer & wine

Mr. McCauley noted that he had reviewed the latest changes that have been made to the draft regulations, including to the language regarding minimum age for individuals involved in transacting sales of beer & wine, and license transfer restrictions. Ms. Jop reviewed comments received regarding the prior draft and language changes requested by Ms. Babson. The Board discussed the changes and made suggestions. At the next meeting Ms. Jop will provide a proposed schedule of fees for the Board to consider.

7. Preparations for December 9, 2013 Special Town Meeting

Ms. Babson noted the Moderator had her meeting this morning and she believes that they have a game plan. One outstanding issue is the Free Cash projection. The Board reviewed potential changes to the schedule. Ms. Babson noted that next Tuesday they will aim to get something mailed out to Town Meeting members, together with the final drafts of the motion language for the various Articles.

8. Boston Marathon Invitational Entries

Ms. Tsagaris reported that the recommended charities and applicants were approved and now visible on the Town's website. All Wellesley-based charities received an entry and all Wellesley-based runners received a number. She wished the runners good luck with their training and fundraising.

9. Town Counsel Search

Mr. Robinson exited the meeting. Ms. Babson reported on the Town Counsel search. Last spring, Mr. Robinson gave notice of his intention to retire at the end of the current fiscal year. The Board decided to put together a profile and see what was special about town counsel representation to date. They contacted departments to find out what the qualities they value now are, and what they should replicate if they could in the new Town Counsel. Ms. Babson observed that Mr. Robinson's role as advisor is what has made him so special to the Town. She listed the members of the Committee put together to conduct the search. The Committee put together an RFP, which is available on the Town's website. Twenty proposals were received. The Committee narrowed the number of proposals, conducted interviews and identified three finalists for the Selectmen to interview in January. These interviews will be conducted in open session. The three finalists are:

- Miyares & Harrington, located in Belmont. Tom Harrington lives in Wellesley and would be lead counsel.
- Anderson & Krieger, located in Cambridge. Attorney Krieger would be lead counsel.
- Kopelman and Paige, a firm in Boston that represents 120 municipalities as town counsel and another 100 as special counsel.

Ms. Babson briefly reviewed statistics regarding each of the firms.

Documents presented

- Tolles Parsons Center
- FY14 Tax Classification Hearing Report

Projects & other updates

Wellesley community development – Ms. Babson reminded everyone to look at the lights in the Square and put on their calendars the Holiday Stroll scheduled for Sunday, December 8, 2013.

Old business / New business

None.

At 9:44 the Board was polled all aye to go into Executive Session to discuss acquisition of real property.

Mr. Robinson returned to the meeting.