

TOWN OF BEDFORD FINANCE COMMITTEE

October 19, 2023

Minutes

Finance Committee Members in attendance: Ben Thomas, Chair, Abigail Seibert, Vice Chair, Karen Dunn, Clerk, Mark Bailey, George Lee, and Philip Prince

Others in attendance: David Castellarin, (Finance Director), Mathew Hanson, Town Manager, Chris Gittins, Chair, Planning Board, Jacinda Barbehenn, Member Planning Board, Tony Fields, Planning Director

Chair Thomas calls the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

Calls the Roll of Committee Members in attendance.

I. REGULAR BUSINESS

1. Public Comment

None.

2. Town Manager Introduction

Chair Thomas recognizes Mathew Hanson, the new Town Manager.

Mr. Hanson provides a greeting to all in attendance. Thanks the Finance Committee for its invitation for this meeting. Provides a summary of his personal background and professional experience. Provides a summary of his experience so far in Bedford. Provides summary of his initial plans to become acclimated to Bedford. States that he hopes to work closely with the Finance Committee and looks forward to it.

3. Planning Board MBTA Engagement Subcommittee Massachusetts Housing Choice Initiative

Chair Thomas recognizes Jacinda Barbehenn Planning Board member.

Ms. Barbehenn thanks the Finance Committee for the invitation to provide a presentation with respect to this topic. She explains that she and Mr. Gittins, the Planning Board Chair, are a sub-committee on this State MBTA zoning change Housing Choice Initiative issue.

Ms. Barbehenn presents a multi slide visual presentation explaining what this Initiative is, what is stated to be the necessity for this initiative and what the initiative requires as far as zoning changes to allow multi-family housing as of right in a designated area of the town.

Ms. Barbehenn also explains that this Initiative does not require the building of multi-family residences but just that it allows such building as of right for the designated area.

Ms. Barbehenn discusses the study being conducted by the Planning Board with respect to various areas of the town which might be appropriate for the designated area or areas.

Ms. Barbehenn discusses outreach efforts being made by the Planning Board and other town organizations in support of Bedford's agreement to comply with this state Initiative. Also discusses potential monetary loss in terms of state grants should the town not agree to comply with this initiative.

Chair Thomas opened the matter to Member questions.

General Member inquiry and discussion of potential and existing opposing viewpoints, what if any interest has been shown by potential builders, what the issues might well be at the eventual Town Meeting based on prior issues being presented to Town Meetings and what approaches might be more advantageous. Also asked about any alternative approaches should this Initiative fail at March Annual Town Meeting? Also suggested that however this proposal is offered at March Town Meeting, it must be absolutely clear what is actually involved and what is being sought from the citizens. Discussion of potential mailing or mailings to all citizens with respect to this proposal including referral to on line information. Discussion of funding for such mailings.

Chair Thomas thanks the Planning Board for providing this presentation.

Ms. Barbehenn thanked the Finance Committee for allowing her to provide this presentation and for the helpful suggestions provided.

4. Future Meetings – Zoom, Hybrid, In Person Discussion/Vote

Chair Thomas states that there are various attendance methods for holding Committee meetings including the combination of in person/on line we are currently using. He notes that most options require the presence of Mr. Castellarin with respect to equipment set up and operation. Should Mr. Castellarin be unavailable, such meetings cannot be held. Even with his attendance, sometimes necessary audio/video fails to work.

Mr. Castellarin notes the necessity to include in the Agenda what the method will be so as to allow for community connection.

General discussion of pros and cons of various methods available.

Chair Thomas states that there has to be a vote to approve any changes in the hybrid method we currently use.

Informal call of the roll results in agreement to continue with the current method used.

II. RECURRING BUSINESS

1. Meetings Attended

Member Seibert discusses attendance at School Committee meeting. Notes the Committee discussed upcoming substantial funding needs. Discussed making a capital request and discusses security changes costs as well as others. Need to replace substantial kitchen equipment. Need to replace roof and boilers at the high school. Also elevator control replacement at two buildings.

Also discussed 50 new students across grades and 10 additional students who are transported to other districts. State will reimburse at some point.

Member Dunn notes that she met with Capital and heard from Fire, Police and IT. \$1.4 million in projects being requested. Biggest things are fire engine replacement, software and equipment and for police involves radio redundancy.

Chair Thomas asks if the Committee's being two members short is causing a problem.

Member Dunn states it does not appear so.

Chair Thomas, Member Dunn and Mr. Castellarin discuss definitions for capital as against operating budget equipment.

Chair Thomas discusses attending Select Board meeting. Dealt with appointments, a liquor license issue and issues involving the Carlisle Road development.

Chair Thomas asks for any other questions or comments.

Chair Thomas asks for Motion to Adjourn.

Member Prince moves to adjourn.

Second by Member Bailey

Roll call of Members in attendance.

Vote: 6-0-0

Motion carries

Time: 9:40 pm

John B. Connarton
Recording Secretary

DOCUMENT LIST

Agenda for October 19, 2023 Meeting

BFMBTAMassachusetts' Housing Choice Initiative: Expanding Opportunities for Multifamily Housing in Bedford – Planning Board Subcommittee Presentation

BFMBTA Multi-Family Housing Info Pamphlet

Finance Committee 2023-2024 Meeting Schedule