

Aquinnah Finance Committee

December 10th, 2020

Minutes

This meeting was held via videoconference

Members Present: Allen Rugg, Tom Murphy, Mark Foster

Also Present: Accountant Emily Day, Town Administrator Jeff Madison

Chairman Allen Rugg called the meeting to order at 10:05am

Minutes: Allen entertained a motion to approve the 7/15/20 minutes. Motion was moved by Tom and seconded by Mark. The Committee voted 3-0, the motion passed.

Review of Special Town Meeting Warrant: Allen noted that the proposed financial articles require the transfer of free cash (previously presented as “raise and appropriate” articles) with the exception of CPC articles. In November, \$257,102 of free cash for FY’20 was certified. If all proposed articles pass (total \$178,755), \$78,349 will remain in free cash. The Committee reviewed and discussed the following articles related to financial matters:

Articles 1, 5 & 8 – articles pertaining to planning for infrastructure improvements (\$35,000 for Town Hall and Offices, \$20,000 for public restrooms and \$20,000 for refurbishment of Town Hall parking & creation of Library parking): Estimates for projects were compiled by Jeff and are top limit figures; An RFP encompassing all projects, except the Library parking project, would be put out for bid; Jeff noted that he wants there to be a “by in” process by town residents to make these improvements because they are significant endeavors for Aquinnah; There was discussion regarding the timeline oversight of the projects and prioritized listing of projects; Jeff stated that all projects are important and hard to prioritize and the needs are great and felt that borrowing money is cheap right now and it is a good time for the Town to move.

Article 12 – \$39,000 in CPC articles pertaining to open space, recreation and community housing pre-development costs and ongoing restoration of the Vanderhoop Homestead: Projects to be managed by planner for town along with Derrill Bazy; The funds would bring the recent Conway School preliminary design forward; There was discussion concerning the overlay integration of this article and article 5 and requested CPC funds for Aquinnah Circle project as well as concern with over expenditure of the Cliff picnic area (article 7); Fin Comm has generally taken the position that CPC is not within their purview and have not expressed opinions on CPC projects or articles; However, given article 7 (request for funds to pay defrayed costs of a CPCP project), going forward Fin Comm should weigh in on CPC expenditures and make it clear that CPC projects should be funded exclusively with CPC funds.

Article 7 – \$10,075 in over expenditure in funds for cliff picnic area improvements – Fin Comm again stated that CPC projects need to be funded exclusively thru CPC funds and that they Town is not asked to come up with any shortfall.

Article 2 - \$12,000 for Harbormaster shed: two years ago, there was an article requesting \$10,000 for a Harbormaster shed which was reduced to \$5,000 and approved but since the amount was not expensed by the following May, the \$5,000 was reallocated to other articles; the \$12,000 is an estimate and the project will be managed by the Select Board.

Article 3 - \$4,873 for West Tisbury School roof design project (Aquinnah's share): other two towns have voted affirmative on the article.

Article 4 – \$21,489.89 in prior FY'19 bills: article needs to be changed to FY'20 at town meeting to reflect correct fiscal year; Requested total is correct and includes a \$320 bill from Landscape, however, the bill is not itemized in the article and therefore the article is not valid; Request needs to be reduced on the Town Meeting floor to reflect the correct amount of bills itemized in the article. Landscape bill we need to be included at a later Town Meeting.

There was brief discussion regarding the Chilmark School requested funds for building improvement which was not included in this warrant. Jeff noted that he had spoken with the Chilmark School Principal who informed him that the requested amount will still be timely if it is included in the Annual Town Meeting in May.

Article 9 – \$19,198.32 for Town vehicle leases: couple years ago, when the Town was in an override situation, Select Board made the decision to lease a truck for DPW and an off island car for Town business and this article seeks to cover those lease expenses which are contractual obligations; Off island car lease is \$400/month and within one year, the Town can purchase the car for \$1; The DPW truck lease costs \$15,000/year; There was discussion on how the off island car could be used on island (potential replacement for Police vehicle or as a Town Office departmental car).

Article 10 - \$10,000 for a grant writer: Town currently has a grant writer who is working on funding for ACC and circle committee; The Circle Comm. has specifically requested that the writer be funded for another year.

Article 11 – \$24,119 in restroom cleaning expenses: amount is to cover last year expenses due to COVID.

Tom motioned to recommend all articles pertaining to financial matters. Motion was seconded by Mark.
The Committee voted 3-0, the motion passed.

Allen entertained the motion that in the future, Fin Comm shall address the implications to the Town's budget of CPC requests. Motion was moved by Mark and seconded by Tom. **The Committee voted 3-0, the motion passed.**

Report on All Island Fin Comm Consideration of Proposed High School Fields Project: Allen informed the Committee that there is no formal entity of the All-Island Fin Comm. This past summer, representatives of Fin Comms from other towns met to consider the town budgetary implications of the proposed High School field project. Allen gave a brief timeline regarding the matter: 7/9 Allen received a request from Meg Bodnar, on behalf of the Field Fund, requesting that the Aquinnah Fin Comm consider the financial implications of the project; 8/11 Allen met with Mollie Doyle and Rebekah Thomson, representatives of the Field Fund, and solicited their comments; 8/12 there was a Zoom meeting of the All-Island Fin Comm, opponents of the project spoke and written questions were posed to the School Administration; 9/15 materials were provided by the Field Fund and simultaneously, there was an All-Island Fin Comm meeting where there was general agreement that if the group as a whole took a position that the representatives from various towns would present the proposal to the town Fin Comms and would then act on it; This has not happened, and nothing has been brought to the Aquinnah Fin Comm. Allen has taken the individual position that this is all premature and recommended that Aquinnah does not take a position. The Committee unanimously agreed to not take a position on the issue at this stage.

UIRSD OPEB Contribution: On 12/2 the Fin Comm received a letter from Mark Friedman, interim School Business Administrator, requesting guidance from the Up Island Fin Comms on the issue of additional funding (\$50,000/year) in the budget to pay down the unfunded OPEB obligation. Aquinnah's share being \$6,000. The Committee discussed whether this was appropriate to add to the School budget. Committee agreed that this is prudent, and that the burden to the town is not substantial considering the \$5.4 mil budget and encouraged to pay down unfunded pension obligations. Emily requested that during the coming budgeting season, the Committee and School discuss how many new positions were created within the past 3-5 years that are eligible for retirement and what the plan is going forward with retirement eligible positions. There was general discussion regarding the generation of unfunded retirement obligations. Allen entertained a motion authorizing him to communicate to Mark Friedman that Aquinnah is in support of the request. Motion was moved by Tom and seconded by Mark. **The Committee voted 3-0, the motion passed.**

Other Business: Jeff discussed the Clear Government program that the Town will be using this year for budget preparation. Program will allow Emily to create a landing place online to post all department budgets. Different people will have different level of access and it will be a "living" document. Committee agreed to meet in early February via Zoom to begin discussing the budget process. Emily noted that there is a possible Finance Committee transfer to be completed in the coming months. Emily will contact the Committee if and when it is ready to be reviewed.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:06am.