

Stoneham Finance & Advisory Board Meeting  
Thursday, June 18, 2020 - 7:30 pm  
All Members Attending Remotely

Attendees:

Tim Waitkevitch, Chair  
Cory Mashburn, Vice Chair  
Andrew Harmon, Secretary

Jennifer Goldenberg Jen Gray  
Ed Hurley Mike Memmolo  
Wendy Smith

*Absent:* Jeremy Doyle, Carol O'Loughlin. Chris Waszak

Guests:

Dennis Sheehan, Town Administrator

Agenda:

1. Review of Meeting Minutes
2. Warrant Article Review
3. Other Business - Non Deliberative
4. Adjournment

Minutes:

The Finance & Advisory Board Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30pm. Mr. Waitkevitch opened the meeting with Agenda Item #1. Understanding that there were no minutes to review during this session, the Board moved discussion to Agenda Item #2.

Mr. Sheehan introduced the new Article (#20) to the Board. The Article grants permission for the Town to pursue admission into a solar energy discount project. Mr. Sheehan presented how the program would work and the benefits to the Town. Mr. Hurley asked whether the program was for existing solar projects or new projects to be built. Mr. Sheehan confirmed that this was for projects in construction or planning stages. Ms. Smith asked for confirmation that if Stoneham did not take part, another Town could take this spot in the program. Mr. Sheehan confirmed that this was correct.

Ms. Gray asked whether the pricing will be variable over time. Mr. Sheehan demonstrated that the rate is variable over time, but would need to research the variables. Ms. Smith then asked how rate variability risk would be spread among entities. Mr. Sheehan explained that any one

entity could take no more of a 50% stake in any one project. But, he added, the Town could invest in (potentially) an unlimited number of projects. Mr. Waitkevitch asked how much of the Town's energy costs could be covered by this program. Mr. Sheehan estimated that it would be about 10%-15%. Ms. Goldenberg asked how the Town invests into the program. Mr. Sheehan explained that there would be a charge on each electric bill towards the program, but the Town would also be realizing a (larger) savings than the charge. He estimated the total savings over 20 years at \$1.1M. He went on to explain that the charge rate would be \$0.0978 per kilowatt hour.

Ms. Gray noted that 10%-15% was an acceptable range to commit to mitigate risk from potentially more efficient modes of energy generation being developed in the future. Mr. Hurley asked whether the Town has the ability to get out of the contract before 20 years has elapsed. Mr. Sheehan said he would research opt-out clauses and get back to the Board on that question.

Mr. Waitkevitch asked whether other Towns are enrolled in this program. Mr. Sheehan replied that there are other Towns. He noted that Winchester is pursuing this exact same opportunity.

Ms. Smith then introduced a motion for favorable action on Article 20. Mr. Harmon seconded; all in favor.

Mr. Sheehan then noted that he would be able to answer questions the Board had from Article 16. The range of the project is from South Street to Franklin Street. The loan would be at 0%. The project would not be performed at the same time as the gas pipeline project and there would be minimal disturbance to the road surface. The Town has asked whether MassDOT will pay for the restoration of the roadway after repairs. Mr. Mashburn introduced a motion for favorable action on Article 16. Mr. Memmolo seconded; all members in favor.

Mr. Waitkevitch then noted that it is understood that Articles #6 and #7 will not be considered at Town Meeting. He then suggested that the Board not take action on these Articles. Mr. Harmon introduced a motion for no action on Article #6. Ms. Goldenberg seconded; all members in favor. Mr. Harmon introduced a motion for no action on Article #7. Mr. Mashburn seconded; all members in favor.

Mr. Sheehan then addressed the Board's outstanding questions on Article #8. The first question was why some departments are seeing salary increases while others are experiencing pay cuts. Mr. Sheehan noted that most of these are union-negotiated increases. The next question was related to decreases in the DPW budget and whether they relate to efficiencies with the Facilities department. Mr. Sheehan noted that most of the decreases in DPW were more about deciding not to fill open positions.

The next question was related to the increase in the Worker's Compensation line item in the budget. Mr. Castellarin explained that the premium for insurance has increased based on an audit of the Town's statistics and potential exposure.

Mr. Sheehan then addressed a question about the police budget. In light of current events in America surrounding funding of police, Stoneham may be examining those questions. But no changes were made to this year's police budget.

Mr. Castellarin updated the Board on what the Retirement Board is doing in light of the pandemic. He noted that the Board has adjusted the previous schedule and will continue to monitor events.

Ms. Goldenberg asked how the coming school year may look. And additionally, how schools will be equipped with disinfecting materials and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Mr. Sheehan responded that the CARES Act provides the Town with some COVID-related funding.

Ms. Goldenberg then asked about the Arena. Mr. Sheehan explained that keeping the ice intact costs about \$20K a month in electricity. So the Arena will remain closed until the Town believes it is in a position to book enough safe ice activities to cover the costs.

Ms. O'Loughlin asked how COVID is affecting the Town's collection of meals taxes. Mr. Castellarin noted that meals taxes are collected three times a year, so the Town does not have that data yet.

Mr. Waitkevitch asked Mr. Sheehan to run through some of the perceived Town service cuts in the proposed budget. Mr. Sheehan began by calling out open positions (Police, Senior Center) that will not be filled. He explained that the Town will not be able to provide the level of support to the new DPW Director (Brett Gonsalves) that they were hoping to do. Mr. Mashburn then introduced a motion for favorable action on Article #8. Mr. Memmolo seconded; all members in favor. Mr. Sheehan and Mr. Castellarin then exited the meeting.

Board Chair then moved discussion to Agenda Item #3. Mr. Waitkevitch suggested that the Board compose descriptions of the votes to present at Town Meeting. He informed the Board that the recommendation write-ups were due to the Clerk on 6/19/2020. The Board then discussed logistics of Town Meeting and it was agreed that Mr. Waitkevitch would present all Board recommendations.

The Board then composed language on all of the Warrant Articles. Ms. Gray introduced a motion to accept the commentary as written. Ms. Smith seconded; all members in favor. Mr. Harmon introduced a motion to adjourn. Mr. Mashburn seconded; all in favor.