The Advisory Committee meeting was held in the West Brookfield Library. The meeting was called to order by Chair Lori Loughlin at 6:15 p.m.

MINUTES: Phil Landine made a motion to approve the minutes of August 2, 2016 as presented. Brad Hibbard second. Vote was unanimous to approve the minutes of August 2, 2016 as presented.

PROPOSED BUDGET FORM: Tabled until next meeting.

TAX COLLECTOR AND TREASURER ELECTED TO APPOINTED: Lori Loughlin has checked and we are able to put a question on the Annual Town Election Ballot in May. If passed at election the Advisory Committee will sponsor an Article for the Annual Town Meeting. General discussion held on how to best inform the voters. Robert Blozie stated we must work at this if we want it to pass. Richard Gobi suggested sending letters to the editor. Agreed to discuss again at a later date and come up with a plan.

EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE PROPOSAL: Lori said she was informed the Select Board was going to discuss this at tonight’s Select Board’s Meeting.

MEETING SCHEDULE: Tom Long suggested changing our meeting day so as not to conflict with Select Board Meetings. Discussion held. It was agreed to meet twice a month on the second and fourth Mondays. The secretary will post a meeting for September 12 and September 26, October 3 (Special Town Meeting) and October 24, 2016. It was agreed to meet next Monday, August 22, 2016 to discuss the proposed budget changes, subject to Pam Griffing’s availability. Lori suggested we speak to the Select Board relative to allowing members to attend meetings via telecommunications.

The Committee members each received a letter from the Board of Selectmen requesting presence at a mandatory Budget Work Shop Meeting on Tuesday, August 30, 2016 at 6:16 p.m. in the Lower Level Conference Room. Henry H. Williams, III, Department of Revenue will be conducting the workshop. Lori Loughlin and Phil Landine are unable to attend.
GOALS: The Committee reviewed our standing list of goals previously adopted with updates on actions taken:

1. Town Manager Position: Selectmen have posted on the Town website a request for members to join the Town Manager Study Committee.
2. Inspection and Permit Fee Schedules: Completed.
3. Delinquent Tax Properties: Status unknown. Auction scheduled with area towns was cancelled.
4. Consolidate Town Department Refuse Hauler contacts into single contract: Completed except for Library, which may have a signed contract with its current hauler.
6. Procuring centralized postage machine. Accountant was going to look into feasibility and potential cost savings to Town. Status unknown.
7. Local Meals Tax: Passed at 2016 Town Meeting. Pending implementation.
8. Establish Grant Writer Position: Voted at Annual Town Meeting to place funds in a “consultant grant writer account” to fund grant applications, etc. Still uncertain who is responsible for seeking grant opportunities on behalf of the town.
9. Town Treasurer & Tax Collector positions from elected to appointed: Defeated at 2015 elections. Advisory Committee will work toward placing question on the ballot at the spring 2017 election and, if passed, Town Meeting 2017.
10. Expand scope of Town’s Annual Audit to include general accounting practices: This was completed during last audit however accounting problems still exist. This should be part of every annual audit until discrepancies are addressed. Advisory Committee still concerned about the lack of a process and oversight related to the acceptance of cash by town employees.
11. Job Descriptions for Town Employees: Not completed.
12. Performance Evaluation Program: Status unknown. Was this addressed by BOS during recent contract negotiations?
15. Public Safety Complex or Police Station Plans: There is currently no funding available. This should be included in capital outlay plans and town should continue to explore funding opportunities.
18. Emergency Generator System for Town Hall Complex: Plans completed. Need to identify funding or grant funds.

General discussion held on how to proceed with goals. Discussed list of priorities. Brad will update list for next meeting. Advisory Committee will request a joint meeting with Select Board to discuss tentative list:

1. Delinquent Tax property.
2. Employee Group Health Insurance
3. Employee Electronic Attendance Management System
4. Employee Personnel Handbook

Advisory Committee would like to meet with the Board of Assessors to get information on properties with back taxes owed and develop a plan for pushing issue forward. Brad will contact assessors to establish convenient meeting time.

FIRE CHIEF AGREEMENT: Agreement reviewed for committee information. Discussed settlement of $56,000.

RESERVE FUND: Committee would like an updated list of funds held in reserve accounts. The Accountant has provided reports in the past. This will be helpful in planning for FY18 budget reviews. Robert Blozie reiterated the need for someone to insure Departments provide BOS with specific reasons for requesting to roll funds (reserve and encumbrances) forward into the next fiscal year.

QUABOAG BOILER: Lori presented a copy of a letter from Massachusetts School Building Authority inviting the Quaboag Regional School District into the Accelerated Repair Program for a potential boiler replacement project at the high school and for a potential window/door replacement project at the Warren Elementary School. Reimbursement rate for Quaboag Regional School district has been set at 71.17%. Quaboag’s share is $35,000 and funds have been transferred within the School’s FY2017 operating budget. For informational purposes only. Lori estimated that this project is probably a year away before being done.

OTHER BUSINESS: Resident/School Teacher Deb Provencher attended our meeting. She asked if changes to employee health insurance were subject to collective bargaining. She said the school employees were told it was not and employees worked with management to implement changes in their group health insurance plans. The changes resulted in more than $100,000 in savings to the District.
She said she has 20 children in her kindergarten class and there are 7-10 school choice students on a waiting list. For the first time Quaboag is assessing Southbridge school choice students $100 per year for transportation.

Phil Landine advised the committee that the concrete sidewalk in front of the elementary school and some exterior doors need to be repaired.

Richard Gobi made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Tom Long second. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine M. Long
Secretary