TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
MAY 18, 2016

Present: Lori Loughlin   Superintendent of Schools Bret Kustigian
         Brad Hibbard   Deb Provencher Resident/Teacher
         Phil Landine
         Robert Blozie
         Tom Long
         Richard Gobi
         Pam Griffing

The meeting was called to order by Chair Lori Loughlin at 6:20 p.m.

MINUTES: Phil Landine made a motion to accept the minutes of April 28, 2016 as presented. Pam Griffing second. Vote was 6 to accept the minutes of April 28, 2016 as presented and one abstain (Brad Hibbard).

SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET: Superintendent of Schools Bret Kustigian joined our meeting. General discussion held. At the Warren Town meeting, the above minimum contribution voted was $225,000 making the Town of West Brookfield above minimum contribution $143,000. Discussion held as to what figure we should use. There was consensus on an amount of $225-250,000. as it was felt that $143,000 was too low and Warren’s match to $309,000 was unrealistic. If West Brookfield passes a figure higher than $143K Warren will have the opportunity to increase their previous contribution vote. Superintendent Kustigian feels the School Committee will amend the article at Town Meeting and increase it to the $309K. Chairman Lori Loughlin recommended a meeting with the Selectboard. Secretary will ask Executive Secretary to put the Advisory Committee on the Agenda for the May 24, 2016 meeting. Bret Kustigian said he will attend. Lori Loughlin will find out when the next School Committee Budget meeting is.

BUDGETS: Lori Loughlin and Richard Gobi met with Executive Secretary and Jack Tivnan. They asked about the contingency fund for the new well. They did not have any information and did not know the amount. Sarah Allen said that the accountant knows the amount of the contingency fund. Lori and Richard discussed not borrowing any more money for the New Braintree Water Line Project but to take it out of the Water Stabilization Account and Jack was okay with that. Jack Tivnan said they had not borrowed the money for the project that was voted in last year. However, when we asked Sarah Allen she stated that the money has been borrowed and a small amount has been expended to pay engineering fees. She said there is $173,382.50 left to expend on the project. Richard Gobi said then there should be a line item in the budget for the loan payment. Advisory Committee asked Sarah Allen when the Advisory Committee Report was going to be mailed out as was stated on the Warrant. Sarah will look into this. The Selectboard has put a freeze on spending. Brad Hibbard asked Pam where the town stands financially after her discussion with the town accountant. Pam said we are
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$200,000 short with $309,000 for the school. She will put together handouts for the next meeting. Lori said there is $41,000 in the Highway budget that has not been expended. Brad questioned how the Highway Department loader will be financed as there had been previous discussion with several options including a debt exclusion and lease to purchase. Lori will check with Selectboard.

Question raised whether contractor who took out the permit to build the two houses on North Main Street was required to install a sidewalk as part of the sub-division project as Tim Morrell had stated at last years’ Annual Town Meeting? Secretary will follow up with Tim Morrell, Planning Board about documentation on these two lots.

WARRANT ARTICLES:

Article #3: Compensation for elected Town: Check figures.
Article #4: Omnibus budget: Hold for further information
Article #5: Principal and interest payments on bonds for QRMHS. Advisory Committee recommends.
Article #6: Cemetery revolving fund. Advisory Committee recommends.
Article #7: Stormwater Authority revolving fund: Advisory Committee recommends.
Article #8: Tree Warden revolving fund: Advisory Committee recommends.
Article #9: Water Commissions to employ licensed water commissioners for standby/emergency work. Advisory Committee recommends.
Article #10: Revaluation account $20,000. Advisory Committee recommends.
Article #11: Reserve Account. Advisory Committee recommends.
Article #12: Loader for Highway Department: Hold for further information
Article #13: New Braintree Water Line. Hold for further information
Article #14: Ground Water Protection District Zoning Map. Advisory Committee recommends.
Article #15: Meals tax. Advisory Committee recommends.
Article #16: Senior Property Tax Work-Off Program. Hold for more information
Article #17: Stretch Energy Code. Hold for more information.
Article #18: Sick pay Accountant: Hold for more information
Article #19: 5 Foster Hill Road. Advisory Committee recommends Pass over article
Article #20: Town Road Maintenance Account. Hold for further information
Article #21: Consultant Grant Writer Account. Hold for further information on amount.
Article #22: Town Building Maintenance Account. Hold for further information on amount.
At 8:20 p.m. the meeting was recessed to Tuesday, May 24, 2016 at 7 p.m. location to be determined in the Town Hall.

Present:   Lori Loughlin       Superintendent of Schools Bret Kustigian
           Tom Long            Director of Finance & Operations Cami Lamica
           Brad Hibbard       Barry Mongeon, Warren Finance Committee
           Phil Landine       Leanne Pierce, School Committee
           Robert Blozie      Craig Burgess, School Committee
           Pam Griffing
           Richard Gobi

The meeting reconvened at 7:06 p.m. in the Great Hall.

ABOVE MINIMUM CONTRIBUTION FOR SCHOOL:  Lori Loughlin said that at our last meeting the Advisory Committee felt a $143,000 above minimum contribution from West Brookfield was not a sufficient amount for the schools and Warren would probably not support their share if we were successful in attaining an above minimum contribution of $309,000. General discussion held relative to agreeing on a figure somewhere between $143K and $309K in order to avoid conflict between the towns. Talked about the possibility of a district meeting. If West Brookfield passes a figure higher than $143K Warren will have the opportunity to go back to town meeting and ask for an increased amount. Bret Kustigian said School Committee does not want to lower the budget and is currently standing by the $309K request.

The meeting was moved from the Great Hall to the Lower Meeting Room where the Committee met with the Selectboard (Jack Tivnan, Sarah Allen), Accountant Marie Arsenault and Executive Secretary Johanna Swain.

Lori Loughlin asked the Selectboard for their opinion on West Brookfield’s above minimum contribution for the school district. Lori said the Advisory Committee had discussed a figure of $225-250K. Jack Tivnan said he was comfortable with $250,000. Sarah agreed. There was discussion that if the Town voted the $250,000, Warren could
hold another town meeting and attempt to raise their contribution. If not passed, there would be a district meeting and if not settled to the satisfaction of the School Committee at district meeting, it would go to the State. Jack Tivnan made a motion that the Selectboard recommend $250,000 above minimum contribution for the school provided that it is not raised by the School Committee. Sarah second. Vote unanimous. Jack said he would oppose the $250K contribution if there was an amendment to raise the amount.

WARRANT ARTICLES DISCUSSED WITH SELECTBOARD:

#3 Compensation for Elected Officials. Question raised on Executive Secretary’s line item “Previous Permanent Accrual” of $1,598.82. Jack stated this is a previous longevity stipend that cannot be taken away. Pam Griffing would like an opinion on this. Jack Tivnan said the Town has a legal opinion on this matter but could not provide further information at this time. Jack will research this issue and get back to Advisory Committee. Marie Arsenault said that Johanna is the only person receiving a longevity stipend at this time. No one else is collecting a longevity stipend.

#4 Omnibus Budget: Richard Gobi said if the school is $250,000, how do we stand on funding the budget and the answer was that now we were projected to be $200,000 short with the school above minimum contribution at $309K. Marie explained that there needs to be further discussion on the other money articles before a concrete number can be established.

#12 Highway Loader: The Committee asked why this article was changed from a debt exclusion to a loan. The Accountant stated it was decided not to make it a debt exclusion as there was already a $400K 2 ½ override on the ballot and she felt a debt exclusion would not pass. Johanna said the Town received a legal opinion that it could not lease a loader. Jack Tivnan said the Town will borrow the money to buy the loader.

#13 New Braintree Water Line: Richard Gobi said he would like the Town to take the money out of Water Stabilization to fund the New Braintree Water line instead of borrowing. Jack Tivnan asked Water Commissioner Lester Paquette and he stated that the Water Department has a five-year plan to use this money for water improvements. The Advisory Committee will recommend taking the money out of Water Stabilization.

#16 Senior Property Tax Work-off: Advisory Committee asked if there was a cost and accountant said there was depending upon the benefit. There is no policy drafted. Brad Hibbard stated that there should be a lot more planning before it goes before Town Meeting. The Committee questioned who will manage this and the answer was it would be in the department heads and assessors. The money will come out of the Overlay
Account. Do you have an amount? Brad said the Advisory Committee will be looking for a number before town Meeting.

#17 Stretch Energy Code: Selectboard said there will be a power point on the web to view.

#18: Sick Pay Accountant: Advisory Committee wants to know how this was calculated. Accountant will provide information.

#19 Foster Hill: The Advisory Committee recommends passing over this article. Jack Tivnan asked not to do this. The Advisory Committee is uncomfortable with this article as the Town does not know the total cost associated with the request. The sponsor of the article met with the Committee and estimated $20,000, and stated it could go higher if asbestos or lead paint were found. The Committee also questioned whether the Town had the legal right to enter private property without legal authority. Johanna said it might not be legal to spend public money on private property. The Committee believes this article should be passed over pending further legal and financial information.

#20 Town Road Maintenance: The amount requested will be $50,000.

#21 Consultant Grant Writer: The amount requested will be $5,000. There currently is a balance of $3,600 in account.

#22 Town Building Maintenance: The amount requested will be $10,000. There is a balance of $5,000 in the current account.

#23 Tax Title Expense: The amount requested will be $20,000. Johanna Swain said that West Brookfield and area towns are planning property auction in late summer or early fall.

#25 Update Master Plan: The amount requested will be $60,000. This is an estimate provided by the Planning Board.

#26 Landfill Maintenance: Sarah Allen said there was not enough money for repairs to the landfill. Brad Hibbard asked is this amount is over and above the requested FY17 Landfill budget and the answer was yes. The amount needed to be determined.

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING JUNE 21, 2016: Selectboard explained that this was for medical bills and overdrawn legal account. As of today the shortfall in the legal account
is $7,000 but the Selectboard expects the deficit to increase by the time of the Town Meeting.

**NORTH MAIN STREET SIDEWALK:** At Town Meeting, Planning Board member Tim Morrell stood up and said the contractor was issued a sub-division permit that required him to install sidewalks. Does the Town have any recourse in recovering the cost of the sidewalk from the contractor? Jack Tivnan will look into this issue.

**WATER DEPARTMENT WELL PROJECT CONTINGENCY FUND:** Lori Loughlin asked the accountant the amount in the Water Department well project contingency fund. She stated there is currently $259,000 in the account but there may be a few more bills due. The Advisory Committee would like to see this money reverted back to the MBTE account.

**8:40 - Session ends with Selectboard and Advisory Committee Meeting continues in Lower Meeting Room.**

**CABLE COVERAGE OF SELECTBOARD MEETING:** Committee questioned why cable coverage of the Selectboard Meeting stopped before the end of their meeting. Robert Blozie said the equipment is programmed for two hours and that is why it did not stay to the end of the meeting.

**ACCOUNTANT & EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ATTENDANCE AT ADVISORY MEETINGS:** Lori Loughlin suggested that we have the accountant and executive secretary attend some of our meetings. It was agreed that we would work out a future schedule for attendance by one or both individuals. Pam Griffing said she has been conversing with the Accountant and suggested we work with her to implement the line item budgeting we have discussed at past meetings.

**EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE:** Johanna Swain provided information on the current status of changes to employee insurance plans. These must be negotiated with the three unions before any changes can be made. Brad asked why wasn’t the insurance issue wasn’t included in the recent union negotiations. The Advisory Committee provided their recommendations to the Selectboard almost two years ago.

**FY17 SCHOOL ABOVE MINIMUM CONTRIBUTION:** Brad Hibbard made a motion to support $250,000 for above minimum contribution to the school contingent on the school not amending the article to a higher amount. Tom Long second. Vote was 6
yes and 1 no to support $250,000 for above minimum contribution to the school contingent on the school not amending the article.

Next meeting will be Monday, June 6, 2016 at 6:15 p.m.

Richard Gobi made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Phil Landine second. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine M. Long
Secretary