



OFFICE OF THE
Advisory Board
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February 16, 2016

Present: Dana Metzler, Amie Stevens, Harold Simmons, Ron Mikol, Christine Muir
Absent: Pam Crocker
Also attending: Town Administrator Tracey Hutton

Meeting opened at 7 p.m.

Water Commission

The Water Board had requested time on our agenda this evening, but has had to cancel due to changes on the board.

Conservation Commission

Leah Basbanes and Alan Chaney presented information regarding a potential Conservation Restriction (CR) purchase on Westford Street. Alan made it clear that he holds no conflict of interest in pursuing this purchase, even though the land is owned by his former wife. He stands to gain nothing from the sale and has cleared his involvement in the discussion with town counsel.

The property is 87 acres, ten of which are already cleared. The other 77 acres would remain forested, as Leah noted is inline with the Conservation master plan. An initial appraisal valued the land at \$750,000 but a second, more recent appraisal is needed. The current appraisal figures \$1,000/acre for agricultural value and \$663,000 for development value. Working with these numbers, the funds for purchase would come from the following sources: \$250,000 from the town's CPC fund, using the Open Space and Unrestricted funds; \$450,000 from the state; \$50,000 from timber funds, land trust money and private donations. This purchase would leave approximately \$20,000 in the Unrestricted account and practically nothing in the Open Space fund. The other two accounts, Historic and Housing, have balances of approximately \$200,000 each.

Christine asked if the town loses tax revenue with a CR purchase. Alan said no; the tax rate is set by Chapter 61 of MA general law and the owner still pays that tax. It was noted that the 3% CPC surcharge currently yields approximately \$250,000 annually, with a 69% match from the state. No other purchases, or use of these CPC funds, are on the horizon. Dana noted that CPC funds could possibly be used to help develop safe pathways or sidewalks. Ron asked whether there's any other way to obtain a CR and Alan's response was that the owner plans to sell the land one way or another this year. The board will take this purchase under consideration and have a recommendation well before town meeting.

Related to this discussion, the board reviewed numbers provided by Tracey on all previous spending of CPC funds. Nearly \$3 million have been spent on land acquisition since 2007. This number is likely to be really low because the town has been paying interest (with CPC funds) on

the \$1.5 million bond taken to pay for the Ferrari property in 2007. The board asked Tracey to confirm the true cost of that purchase as well as the Miller conservation restriction purchased last year, to account for the interest payments. The board thinks the Ferrari payments include \$80,000 in principal and \$51,000 in interest annually.

As of June 2014, the Timber Fund contains \$77,000. The board asked Tracey to confirm who has authority to spend those funds.

Meeting Minutes

We reviewed the meeting minutes of January 6 and February 1. Ron asked for changes to the Feb 1 minutes to reflect discussions on Public Safety Complex Feasibility Study and Safe Pathways engineering.

The board unanimously approved the minutes of January 6.

Transfers

There is one transfer for \$10,000 to the Veterans' Benefits account. The board noted that the FY17 budget should include a request of \$38,500 for this account as we expect this to be the annual cost of veterans' benefits. The state does provide 75% reimbursement within the following fiscal year.

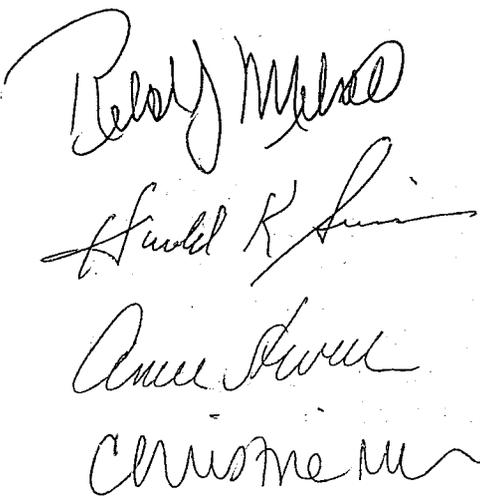
The board unanimously approved the transfer of \$10,000.

FY17 Budget Review

Tracey provided a copy of the working budget and the Overview sheet, which contains a revenue forecast. Dana questioned why the FY17 base number doesn't match the FY16 subtotal, as expected. Tracey will consult with Lorraine.

Dana also asked if the Personnel Board expects the new recommended wages to be reflected in the FY17 budget and Tracey said they do. The Advisory Board and Tracey need these numbers ASAP in order to begin creating a balanced budget for FY17.

We adjourned at 9:10 p.m.



Handwritten signatures of four individuals: Betty Miller, Harold K. Smith, Anne Powell, and Christine M.