

Provincetown Finance Committee

Public Meeting

March 26, 2004

8:00 A.M.

Members Present: Sue Buerkel, Matthew Clark, Gail Enos, Ruth Gilbert (Chair), Mark Leach, Ann Maguire, Thomas Thurston, and Robert Vetrick.

Member Absent: Virginia Ross

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 a.m.

School Budget:

The first item on the agenda was a revisit to the school budget which as proposed contains an increase of approximately \$77,000. The three people in attendance from the School Committee were Therese Nelson, Debra Trovato, and Dr. Frank Wills. The members of the School Committee defended their budget by saying they had gone line by line and they saw no other cuts possible. They also reported that they had just lost an arbitration decision the prior week that raised the cost of one of their out-of-district student placements by approximately \$50,000.

Robert Vetrick said that the Finance Committee has been very strict about cutting people and preventing computer upgrades thus if the FinCom were to endorse the School Department budget, it would be a total insult to the people who have suffered job losses, etc. Dr. Vetrick also stated that every time a cut in the School Budget is suggested by the FinCom, then people are told that this means that sports and academic programs would suffer (never administration cuts).

The Finance Committee wondered about possible cuts being made in administration? Ms. Nelson said that decisions in that regard haven't been made as yet.

Motion: Matthew Clark made a motion to recommend the School Budget of \$4,185,330.41 (eliminating the \$27K increase left over after the \$50,000 arbitration decision). Ann Maguire seconded the motion and it passed 7-0-1 opposed (Vetrick).

The discussion then shifted to the \$495K proposal for capital improvements to the theatre and the gym. In response to a question in the last meeting, the School Committee thought they could probably get most and probably all of the improvements to the gym done for \$250,000, but felt that they might not have enough for the floor. Robert Vetrick indicated that the floor would likely have to be done based on damage it will sustain from the scaffolding required to repair the ceiling.

Motion: Tom Thurston made a motion to recommend \$250K of the \$495K request to finish up the gym of the high school. Ann Maguire seconded the motion and it passed 9-0-0.

Cultural Council Budget

Ruth Gilbert received a call from Hunter O'Hanian and Marian Roth asked the Finance Committee to reconsider their budget.

Motion: Ann Maguire made a motion to reconsider the budget, Robert Vetrick seconded it and it was approved unanimously.

Cherie Mittenthal, the Chair of the Cultural Council, along with another member presented their future plans to the FinCom. They receive \$2K annually from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and would like a budget of \$2,500 from the Town. They plan on having a "poet laureate" appointed for the Town and would like the poet to open Town Meetings. They anticipate asking Stanley Kunitz. The poet would receive a stipend/honorarium of \$2K and the remaining \$500 would go for administrative needs i.e., secretary, mailings, and stamps.

Motion: Robert Vetrick made a motion to approve Budget 673 as presented; Ann Maguire seconded the motion and it was approved 8-0-0.

Article 29-ATM Study Septage at Sewerage Plant

Jonathan Sinaiko, chair of the Water and Sewer Board, presented a lengthy discussion on the benefits of using the new sewer treatment plant as a way of possibly disposing of septage waste from local haulers. The article requests \$20K for the study.

Motion: Matthew Clark made a motion to approve ATM Article 29, without money, with the proviso that the subject be incorporated into the Phase II Wastewater study funded in Article 4-Subpart 7. Tom Thurston seconded the motion and it passed 8-0-0.

Article 30 – Human Services Grant Program

David Eliseo presented his proposed budget to the FinCom. He fielded a few questions regarding the John Henry Trust as it referred to Cape Cod Children's Place. David was also asked about Sight Loss Services, Inc. and if it related to the Lions organization. There was not an answer for that question.

Motion: Robert Vetrick made a motion to accept the budget as proposed, (Ann added that Children's Place should include a Provincetown person on its Board) Tom Thurston seconded the entire motion and it was approved 8-0-0.

STM Articles 17, 18, and 19 – Open Space

Robin Evans and Celine Gandolfo presented their plans to the FinComm.

Article 17 – Land Bank Pre-acquisition Expenses– \$25K

Motion: Robert Vetrick made a motion to approve the expense, Ann Maguire seconded the motion and the vote was 7-0-1 abstention (Tom Thurston)

Article 18 – Open Space – 82 Harry Kemp Way

This property abuts Crowley's Pond and contains approximately 2.9 acres BUT it has a title problem. It was suggested that the property could be taken by "friendly" eminent domain for \$125K. The title then would automatically be cleared.

Motion: Matthew Clark made a motion to approve Article 18.

A discussion on the motion then began. Dr. Vetrick said that he felt all of the acquisitions of Open Space have been in the east end (Keith Bergman cited the purchase near Shankpainter Pond as a location for the west end). Robert further said he would prefer little pocket parks throughout the Town taking advantage of the few open spaces left. Robert also felt that – thus far – none of the acquired open spaces have been made "user friendly" i.e., lack of signage, paths, etc

Motion (continued) Ann 2nd the approval of Article 18. The vote was 4 in favor – 3 opposed – 1 abstention. (Ruth Gilbert)

Motion: Ann Maguire made a motion to instruct the Land Bank to make the lands they own “user friendly” BEFORE making any other purchases. Tom Thurston seconded the motion and it carried 8-0-0.

STM Article 19 – 290 F Bradford Street

The Land Bank proposes to acquire this property for over three times its assessed value. After a bit of discussion on the pros and cons of acquiring this property and the owners need to sell it, the following motion was put forward:

Motion: Tom Thurston made a motion to NOT recommend the purchase. Robert Vetrick seconded the motion and the vote was 5 in favor , 0 opposed, and 3 abstaining (Sue, Ruth, and Matthew).

(Robert will speak on 17 – Tom will speak on 19 – Matthew on 18. Tom will address the school’s capital improvements and Ann will support the Cultural Council.)

Article 1 – Special Town Meeting Community Preservation Act (CPA)

Margaret Bergman and Patrick Manning, members of the Affordable Housing Task Force, addressed the Finance Committee regarding STM Article 1. Patrick said they were looking at the cash that CPA offers because we have a major crunch in affordable housing. The state is matching CPA funds. He also added that the whole community gets to say what the money is spent on.

Keith Bergman then joined in his support for CPA saying it could be used to revamp and repair the Town Hall. He further said that the Cape End Manor care campus plans need approximately \$1.5M to make the deal palatable for attracting a group to run it. Ruth Gilbert asked if we are offering the proposed group coming in CPA funds? Keith countered that the CPA would only mean \$59 for the average house and he further said that people were amazed that this would be the only increase.

Margaret Bergman said this has been under discussion for nearly a year and it does represent the community at large. She also noted that it won’t pass unless it has a strong support.

Mark Leach noted that CPA has become a hot button topic along with CEM. People who spoke to him felt they are not being given all the information related to CPA. No one who spoke with him had signed the petition to get the surcharge question on the ballot – They had no idea there was a 3% surcharge. Looking at the article in the warrant by itself, it appears to be setting up a committee only. The surcharge should be part of the overall presentation regarding CPA. There is no overall understanding on what the CPA funds are intended to be used for and people do not want more money going into a big black hole.

Then there was a hasty reference to the 11 acres the state wanted to deed to Provincetown that we turned down. Supposedly only two people wanted it developed as affordable housing. Ann M. referred to the whole matter as a “red herring.”

The premise discussed was that if you don’t vote for CPA then that means you’re against affordable housing; the group denied this. They are all in favor of affordable housing but Robert Vetrick sees it

as the buzz word where everything becomes passable if that terminology is used.

Sue Buerkel commented that since the CPA is being proposed as a funding mechanism/solution for affordable housing, then more than 10% of CPA funds as currently proposed should be allocated to that. The Town Manager agreed and told the Committee that such a question had been asked of the State. It has not yet been determined if this can be done. Mr. Bergman was also asked if these funds could be applied to projects such as the Library. His answer was, “probably.”

Matthew Clark said there are millions of good things that the CPA could be used for but there is no deadline for this action. He said it probably should be done at some point, possibly as soon as a Special Town Meeting this Fall, but he cannot recommend it now. The Town needs to take some affirmative steps to address its current fiscal crisis before asking the taxpayers to pay a new special purpose tax. We would love to support this but let’s decide what to do with the CEM first. The Town is full of good ideas but what we haven’t seen is prioritization largely because there has been no real leadership from the BoS or the Town Manager. The CPA is a laudable goal, but we can’t do everything at once.

Ann Maguire said that because we ask questions about the CPA – it doesn’t mean that we’re against affordable housing. Last year there was a proposal to raise money for affordable housing but no plan in place. If you can tell us what your priorities are for the next year it would be helpful. Patrick is making plans and was asked, “If there were moneys raised by the CPA – how would you get your list of occupants? On the point system based on years on being residents? The 144 units you were going to have – does this bring us over 10% - are any dollars going to be targeted to 40B? Are you going to prioritize units i.e. rentals?” Ann continued, “Do you have any thoughts of elderly who are in need?”

After a bit more discussion it was decided to table the issue until a future meeting which was scheduled for March 30th at 8:00 a.m.

Motion: Sue Buerkel made a motion to table STM Article 1 (CPA) until the March 30th meeting because at that time the BoS may have made a decision on the Cape End Manor (CEM). The motion was seconded and unanimously approved. 8-0-0

Mark Leach left.....

The Committee then began reading over the Town Warrant once again with the following findings:

Special Town Meeting
Article 1 – tabled

Article 4 - done

Article 5 – Mark will handle

Article 6 – Ann will address

Article 7 – Tom, Gail, and Sue

Article 8 – Gail handling

Article 9 – Deferral of water charges for low income elderly

Motion: Robert Vetrick made a motion to approve; Matthew Clark seconded the motion and it was approved 7-0-0.

Article 10 – Water Enterprise Fund

Motion: Robert Vetrick moved to approve, Gail Enos seconded the vote was 7-0-0.

Article 11 – Wastewater Enterprise Fund

Motion: Robert Vetrick made a motion to approve, Ann Maguire seconded and the group voted 7-0-0.

Article 12 – Budget Adjustments

Motion: Matthew Clark moved to recommend; Gail seconded the motion and it passed 7-0-0.
(Ruth will defend and KAB will write the script.)

Article 13 – Fund Collective Bargaining Agreements

Motion: Robert Vetrick moved to approve; Ann Maguire seconded and the vote was 7-0-0.

Article 14 – Use of Parking Fund

Motion: Sue Buerkel moved to approve; Robert Vetrick seconded and the vote was 7-0-0.

Article 15 – on hold until Tuesday

Article 16 – Road and Sidewalk Repairs

Motion: Ann Maguire made a motion to accept; Matthew Clark seconded it and the vote was 7-0-0. (Ann will speak on it.)

Article 17, 18, and 19 – done

Article 20 – Meals tax

Motion: Robert Vetrick made a motion to reserve recommendation; Sue Buerkel seconded the motion and the vote was 6-in favor, 1 opposed (TT), and no abstentions.

Article 21 – Expanding Local Room Tax

Motion: Robert Vetrick moved to approve; Sue Buerkel seconded and the vote was 6 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention (AM).

Article 22 – no concern

Article 23 – Home Rule – Assessors

Motion: Tom Thurston moved to accept; Matthew Clark seconded the motion. Voted: 6 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention (SB).

ATM Article 2 – Operating Budget

The group decided to reduce the group health line to \$4,304,728 – a reduction of \$148,911.

Motion: Robert Vetrick made a motion to approve the reduction of \$148,911 in the group health line. Matthew Clark seconded the motion and it passed 7-0-0.

STM – Article 24 – Pier Corporation

Mr. Bergman told the group that there had been recent, excellent discussions between Pier Corp & ProFish.)

ATM Articles 5 and 6

Keith Bergman will introduce these two articles.

Ruth Gilbert asked all the members to look over the warrant and anything they deem important will be discussed at their next meeting on Tuesday.

The meeting adjourned at 1:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Evelyn Gaudiano

Evelyn Rogers Gaudiano

Approved by _____ on _____, 2004
Ruth Gilbert