

**TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**Long Range Planning Committee**  
**Fogg Library Meeting Room 2**  
**December 3, 2014, Wednesday**

Present: Ed Harrington, Chair  
Michael Smart, Vice Chair  
Ken DiFazio, Councilor

Not Present: Jane Hackett, Councilor  
Brian McDonald, Councilor

Recording Secretary: Mary Barker

Chair Harrington called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.

**Discussion and review on development of proposed revenue streams**

Chair Harrington opened the meeting with the reading of the following prepared statement:

*“I’ve been given the responsibility to be the Chair of this new committee. I think what we need to plan for is determined by our present and future needs. The first step in creating a plan is setting a goal. In my opinion, the first goal would be to acknowledge that there are town services that aren’t being provided to an acceptable degree.*

*Over the last several years, I have developed a short list of areas that are very concerning. We know that our schools are at the very bottom of the list in net school spending.*

*We have had the Fire and Police Chiefs in to speak about their respective staffing needs and they confirmed that staffing has been reduced by over 30% in the last thirty years. Both chiefs requested significant increases in staffing.*

*Mayor Kay presented us with a road condition study that asserted that we would need additional funds in excess of a million dollars annually to just maintain our streets at current levels, more is needed to go beyond maintaining the status quo.*

*The Weymouth Athletic Boosters have explained that the playing fields need major improvements.*

*Bill McKinney has cited OPEB figures of over 10 million annually that we aren’t paying. We have to discuss as to whether we look for funding, seek legislative relief, ask for union concessions or develop other options and strategies.*

*Future Long Range Planning efforts might include a projection of needs and opportunities not yet on the horizon.*

*We might need to address developing energy resources, we might look at our ocean front properties and try to develop strategies regarding real estate values, seawalls, and roads in the face of rising sea levels.*

*I'm sure that there are many areas that we should look at but, our efforts should be prioritized to address current issues first."*

Chairman Harrington noted that the discussion should focus on increasing the revenue stream. Some obvious areas include Schools, Fire and Police Departments, Fields and Roads, and OPEB. He asked if the committee would want to prioritize the items.

Vice Chairman Smart responded that OPEB would be at the end of his short list.

Councilor DiFazio responded that they should prepare a list of all items to address, and then prioritize which are the most important, and then determine what is a reasonable amount to raise for each. Every department will want funding, but what is a reasonable expectation for day- to-day. There aren't many revenue streams available to tap so they need to be quantified and then project to the public the increased benefit to the town by x amount of dollars and show specific examples. The list can't be too big or too general. They first must identify the needs. The Mayor can request reports from each department.

Vice Chairman Smart noted that Chief Grimes already produced a report detailed out for the next ten years that includes the Police Department's needs, and Chief Stark produced a report for a comparison for fire-based ambulance service.

Chairman Harrington asked if the committee would want to include a discussion of emerging technologies in the needs of the police and fire departments (such as cameras). The discussion also should include streams to explore, particularly town-based ambulance service. Should the fire department discussion include maintaining status quo or should it include the added cost to run a town-based ambulance service that would provide a revenue stream? Should the discussion include the cost to re-open a fire station? A discussion surrounding current service occurred and it was noted that for every 911 medical call, typically 3 departments are responding- Police, Fire and EMS.

The discussion of each department's equipment needs will have to be differentiated by what the service will be. Discussion with the school department should include the costs to bring back science to the primary schools, in addition to the technology needs. They will need to discuss privatization (whether or not it is an ultimate goal) and if it is-- what startup costs will be. Total cost needs to include the loaded cost- including all employment costs (insurance, pensions, etc.)

Councilor DiFazio noted that some items are policy decisions; there are some things that could be more cost-effective if done differently. The discussion segued into how to garner information and provide back up for supporting their suggestions. Chairman Harrington noted the library services could be tapped for much of the research. Costs for privatizing ambulance service could be obtained from surrounding towns. Councilor

DiFazio suggested the town's Accountant could be invaluable in putting together some of the research materials for the committee. The committee could provide general parameters of the material they need to review. There are also many in the general public who could provide assistance to the committee, including some in attendance at this meeting.

Vice Chairman Smart reported that some of the changes that are being suggested are within the purview of the Mayor – charter changes. Chairman Harrington noted he recognizes a certain futility with change, but they are obligated to try. The committee needs to get the information from each department and prepare an organized, realistic list of the needs of the town to present to the administration and the public. They should also incorporate empirical data from other towns which successfully have turned around their funding dilemmas.

Discussion of free cash ensued and the appearance of it to the lay person as an unknown “found” source rather than pre-funding. The public needs to be better educated on the process to understand it if they hope to obtain public support for action. These monies are not a renewable fund. They need to find renewable income to fund continuing costs.

Chairman Harrington suggested that a future meeting should include a discussion of debt exclusion or override action, meals tax increase, and to stop subsidizing the trash service. EH- future meeting disc override, higher meals, stop subsidizing trash.

The committee discussed the process for debt exclusion, where the initiative originates; who may initiate it, how to put in on the ballot, who determines what is on the list and how to gain broad-based support for it. They also discussed the approach without being noncommittal; and whether there are penalties if it is not done correctly. There needs to be a galvanizing point and there isn't one across the community now. It's a complicated issue with a history. The committee discussed the history that began with the increase in athletic fees; the suggestion was discussed that it could be packaged into an override for school fees, transportation, WeyCare, etc. The committee noted some of the surrounding towns successfully put forward overrides both successfully and recently, because they were well-organized, focused and galvanized campaigns.

Vice Chairman Smart noted the public needs to be educated away from the mindset that it does not affect taxpayers without kids in schools. A community that supports its educational system benefits all residents. It was noted that the limited local aid- lottery, local and state aid are limited and the cost to each homeowner for an override should be included.

Councilor DiFazio suggested that anything in excess of \$75 per household will be difficult to support. They will also have to surmount the general public perception that Southfield is going to take care of all of the town's financial difficulties.

A motion was made by Councilor DiFazio to request the administration provide a report, with assistance from the Town Auditor, from each department of the needs and costs for further study and was seconded by Councilor Smart. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Adjournment

At 8:00 PM, there being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Councilor DiFazio and seconded by Vice Chairman Smart. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Approved by Councilor Ed Harrington

Respectfully submitted by Mary Barker as Recording Secretary  
Voted unanimously on 5 January 2015