

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
Abigail Adams Auditorium
Abigail Adams Middle School
Monday, May 12, 2008

Present: Michael Smart, President
Arthur Mathews, Vice President
Robert Conlon, Councilor

Kenneth DiFazio, Councilor
Ed Harrington, Councilor
Thomas J. Lacey, Councilor
Michael Molisse, Councilor
Patrick O'Connor, Councilor
Victor Pap III, Councilor
Kevin Whitaker, Councilor

Also Present: Susan M. Kay, Mayor
James Wilson, Chief Financial Officer
Michael Gallagher, Director of Administrative Services
Frank Fryer, Town Clerk
George Lane, Town Solicitor

Absent: Maureen Duffy, Town Auditor
Brian McDonald-Councilor

Recording Secretary: Mary Briggs

President Michael Smart called the Annual Town Meeting to order at 7:30 PM. Town Clerk Franklin Fryer conducted the roll call. Councilor McDonald was not present at roll call and would not be in attendance. President Smart also noted the presence of each town department's directors.

Presentation of the Disability Awards

Mayor Susan Kay presented Certificates of Appreciation for Disability Day Awards to Jean Racicot and Debra Rizzo for their work in creating Brownie Scout Troop 3329 serving special needs girls.

Presentation of Scholarship Awards

Lois Desmond, Chairperson of the Scholarship Committee gave a brief overview of the committee and its work. In its 17th year, 191 completed applications were reviewed. Memorial donations, businesses and individual sponsors provide the funding for the scholarships. The following 38 were congratulated and presented awards: Kelsey M.

Brennan, Julie K. Corey, Stefania S. Cunningham, Samantha N. Curtin, Marissa DiBiasie, Christopher Dolan, Debbie-Ann M. Ferretti, Hilary L. Finnegan, Jillian C. Fitzgerald, Rhianna R. Flanagan, Alysson L. Flannery, Denise M. Galvin, Sara Giannandrea, Matthew J. Gill, Samuel J. Goldman, Julie Harkins, Connor A. Henley, Casey W. Kirsch, David W. Lockhead, Erin E. Lord, Amanda M. Losee, Donal T. Magrane, Luke J. McCabe, David McCoy, Courtney L. McNamara, Tracey L. Moloney, Danielle A. Moore, Elizabeth J. Mullin, Emma A. Murphy, Mackenzie K. O’Dea, Meghan L. Prendergast, John S. Quigg, Ashley E. Simmons, Lynn M. Sullivan, Mary E. Torrey, Erin K. Walsh, Bridget K. White and Kristen D. Zmuda.

Town Council Highlights for Fiscal Year 2008

President Smart introduced the members of the Town Council and reviewed the highlights of the last year, including the reorganization of various town departments resulting in cost savings, the ordinances passed regarding storm water discharge, the establishment of a sex offender residency restriction, appointments to various committees and boards, including the Board of Zoning Appeals, Community Preservation Committee and Planning Board.

He briefly reviewed Community Preservation projects, including acquiring bicycle racks, land purchase, and architectural studies.

He also noted the plan for building a new water treatment plant.

He noted the various council roles, including responding to phone emergencies and attending board and neighborhood meetings. He thanked Mayor Kay, CFO Wilson and Auditor Maureen Duffy for the cooperation from the administration.

He introduced some of the School Committee members in attendance, including James Lockhead, Diana Flemer and Gail Sheehan.

Public Hearings

A MOTION was made by Councilor Mathews to OPEN the PUBLIC HEARING on **items 08 026 through and including 08 039**, and was seconded by Councilor O’Connor. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Mayor Susan Kay presented the budget. Under chapter 6A of the Town Charter a public hearing is required to hear the budget in the form of a Town Meeting.

The Mayor reported that as budget season began, she was not surprised to learn spending would have to be kept down. Deficits have become larger than expected, and will need to be addressed in FY09. The town is unable to provide the same level of service as in FY08. New recurring sources of revenue must be found. Weymouth must continue to offer competitive rates to its workers, and address traffic and drug problems. The Mayor thanked all departments for their spirit of cooperation.

Included in the budget are all fixed costs, and the restored lottery funding previously removed from the House Ways and Means budget. The FY09 proposed budget accommodates all increases in fixed costs, plus step increases and eliminates total reliance on one time revenues. It conforms with the Department of Revenue's letter of 12/27/07, mandating increases in the overlay and abatements which have been in deficit for the last two budget seasons, and a realistic estimate of local receipts. The deficits include snow removal, workers compensation and health insurance. Seventeen collective bargaining units are in negotiations. A 1% increase equals an increase in the budget of \$700,000. Measure 08 026, a balanced budget translates to a cut in services across the board, and includes unfunded positions, layoffs and voluntary furloughs. There are no new capital requests.

Mayor Kay provided a cost overview of the budget and cash reserves. From 2004 to 2007 cash reserves have been used for one-time costs, but now the free cash fund balance is currently at \$180,000.

She introduced Mr. Wilson to review the particulars of the budget. He reported out in the form of a power point presentation. He provided an overview of the appropriation request and recent history of Cash Reserves.

Mr. Wilson provided the breakdown of the budget request. Revenue projections were reviewed, as was the history of state aid. He noted the net aid to the town is less than a 1% increase from FY08 to 09, which means the town is required to depend on local receipts. He then reviewed the real estate tax levy (65.1M on which the 2.5 increase is calculated.) Total real estate tax levy is \$70M.

He then reviewed revenue from other sources including trash removal, CPA and the Waterways Fund, which total \$1.77M.

Mr. Wilson provided a summary of those expenses which have substantially increased- property and casualty insurance, veterans benefits, health insurance, retired teachers' health insurance, Medicare, unemployment, retirement, snow removal, trash removal and overlay for exemptions and abatements.

Mr. Wilson reported on the fixed costs, including debt service, state charges, overlay, property insurance, the reserve fund, health insurance, pensions, employer taxes, life insurance, workers compensation and unemployment.

He then reviewed the school budget costs, which is a 2% decrease from FY08 and includes step increases but not COLA, increases in costs for utilities, transportation, and the elimination of 29.5 positions.

Mr. Wilson reported on the public safety and Publics Works budgets, which also eliminated positions, allows for increases to utility and snow removal costs, and realignment/elimination of positions for efficiency.

In the general government, the remaining 19 departments were also reviewed, and include step increases, voluntary furloughs for non-union employees, allowance for increases in utilities, reorganization of personnel in the Mayor's Office and Administrative Services, as well as shifting some costs to grant and revolving accounts.

Mr. Wilson then reviewed each of the following Operational Requests:

- 08-027** Revolving Accounts Annual Authorization
- 08-028** Gift Accounts Annual Authorization
- 08-029** Reserve Fund Transfer
- 08-030** Free Cash Appropriation
- 08-031** Appropriation to Overlay Accounts
- 08-032** Sewer Enterprise Fund
- 08-034** Water Enterprise Fund
- 08-033** Wetland Replication Fund
- 08-035** Great Pond Water Treatment Plant Supplemental Contract
- 03-036** Tank Painting Reed Avenue
- 03-037** Great Pond Water Treatment Plant authorization to borrow and additional \$5M

Mr. Wilson provided an update on the Water Treatment Plant plans as well as the need to scale back to reduce costs by \$5M which include a reduction in the plant footprint, substitution of geothermal HVAC with traditional system, replacement of natural gas with diesel generator, exterior design and roofing changes, and elimination of garages.

08-038 Community Preservation Committee

Mr. Wilson reported on the budget for the Community Preservation Committee including estimated revenues, expenses, and mandatory set aside reserves.

08-039 Community Preservation Project Request

Mr. Wilson reviewed the supplemental request for a structural study of the Abigail Adams birthplace.

He then reviewed the recent developments affecting the proposed budget. They include deficits of \$570K in the FY08 snow removal budget, \$100K in the Workers Compensation fund, and \$3.4M in the health insurance budget. Health insurance claims plus HPHC expenses as well as a deficit from FY07 are contributing to the deficit. Rates for health insurance were increased by 14% as recommended by town's health care consultants in March 2007, and despite the increase, a projected deficit of \$1.2M is anticipated as of June 2008. This is required to be addressed prior to setting the tax rate. There are no funds available to reduce the deficit, and the ratepayers' premiums are insufficient to cover.

Mr. Wilson then reviewed available options for FY09, which include further budget cuts, increase in health insurance rates as of July 1, use of one time revenues to cover-including sale of Fulton School and stabilization account funds, a proposition 2 ½

override, moving the retired teachers into the towns insurance plan and a review of all options in the town's health insurance plan.

Mr. Wilson then summarized and noted the town is exploring all options, including consortium bidding, and will keep parties informed. The administration is requesting continued cooperative effort with departments. A supplemental budget will be submitted to accommodate the health insurance deficit and new increases, as well as achieve a more stable budget.

The public was then invited to comment. Joanne Hamilton, a retired teacher addressed comments in the Patriot Ledger, and implored the Council not to place an unfair burden on retired teachers or renege on a prior commitment to those members by the town.

James Lockhead, Weymouth School Committee, asked if the town stands to see any revenue in the near future from the Southfield expansion. Mr. Wilson noted that currently the town is providing services to the project and is being reimbursed but will not see revenue until infrastructure has been completed, or for at least the next four years.

Linda MacDonald of 58 Laurel St. addressed the Council. She noted that she was present at many meetings throughout the budget process and had several points to share. She did not feel the pain of budget cuts was felt evenly across town departments- that the school department was unfairly burdened. Layoffs in school positions is not the same as not funding positions which are already unfilled in the DPW. She questioned the number of custodians at the high school, the elimination of curriculum coordinators. She addressed cuts in police, which will be in traffic crossing guards, which essentially affects the school department and safety of children. She requested better oversight of DPW's sanding and salting during inclement weather. She noted the removal of kindergarten aides is standard practice. She felt there is not enough options in the town's health insurance and it should be further explored. She requested the Council not look to the schools if further cuts are needed, but instead consider tax deferments, fire station closures and replace with ambulance service, eliminate parades, and more "cross-pollenization" of departments, similar to current maintenance practice at town and school parks and fields.

Mayor Kay addressed Ms. MacDonald's comments. She disagreed that the cuts were made inequitably. She also noted that it's the nature of the school department to be labor intensive, but that the School Committee ultimately determines where its cuts are to be made. The Mayor stated that the purpose is not to pit departments or employees against each other.

Jim Moore, of Green Street, noted that he has been a town meeting member and has given 30+ years' service to the town. He asked if there is grant money available for any part of the Great Pond Water Treatment Plant. Mr. Wilson responded no, but that borrowing is probably more economical in an open bond market. Mr. Moore noted that he was an employee in a bargaining unit in the 1980's, which accepted a 0%, increase and urged current members not to go that route; that it is never recouped. He urged

members to accept layoffs before accepting another zero increase. He agreed that the school budget should get more, but it should be spent where it is needed- in the classroom. He also noted that public service employees are “owned 24/7” and reminded the Council not to lose perspective on public safety. He applauded the Mayor for her efforts.

Cathy Torrey, 14 Riverbank Rd. addressed the Council. She appreciated Mayor Kay’s stand. She noted that cuts will be detrimental to the school department, but the request is justified. It is the department in town that is strictly mandated by federal and state guidelines. She stressed to the Council the value of education to the whole community, and noted that reductions made now will take years to undo.

A MOTION was made by Councilor Mathews to CLOSE the PUBLIC HEARING and was seconded by Councilor O’Connor. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Reports of Committees – Budget/Management

08-031 Appropriation to Overlay Accounts

Chairman DiFazio reported this item was referred to the Budget/Management Committee by Town Council on April 1, 2008, and heard by Budget/Management at its meeting on 4/17, at which time it was unanimously voted to bring to full Council for favorable action. A MOTION was made by Councilor DiFazio to appropriate the sum of \$185,708.31 from the 2003 overlay account and \$80,000 from the 2004 Overlay Account to be applied as follows: \$40,000 to the 2006 Overlay Account and \$225,708.37 to the 2007 Overlay Account. Motion seconded by Councilor Mathews. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

08-035 Great Pond Water Treatment Plant Design Supplemental Contract

Chairman DiFazio reported that the supplemental contract was referred to Budget/Management by Town Council on 4/17, and heard by Budget/Management at its meeting on 4/17. On May 5, 2008, the Budget/Management Committee voted unanimously to bring to full Town Council with a recommendation for favorable action. A MOTION was made by Councilor DiFazio to raise and appropriate \$250,000 for a supplemental contract for cost overrun.

Councilor [Melisse Lacey](#) noted that as this was voted by Town Council to approve for bonding and that as this represents a significant Change Order, the council should be given sufficient time to review the item prior to a vote.

Councilor DiFazio deferred to Mr. Wilson as to whether a delay in a vote would interfere with the bond issue approval process.

Mr. Wilson responded that it should not affect the schedule of events; however he did note that until approved, project bids cannot be released. The next Town Council meeting is scheduled for June 2, 2008.

A MOTION was made by Councilor Lacey to POSTPONE item **08 035** until the next Town Council meeting, and was seconded by Councilor O'Connor. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

At 9:30 PM, there being no further business, a MOTION was made by Councilor Mathews to adjourn and was seconded by Councilor O'Connor. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Approved by

Michael Smart-President