

**Needham Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting of October 15, 2014**

The meeting of the Finance Committee was called to order by the Chair, John Connelly, at approximately 7:30 pm in the Great Plain Room at the Town Hall.

Present from the Finance Committee:

John Connelly, Chair; Louise Miller, Vice Chair
Members: Richard Creem, James Flinton, Richard Reilly, Rick Zimbone

Others present:

David Davison, Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director
Anne Gulati, Needham Public Schools Director of Financial Operations

Citizen Requests

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Approval of Minutes of Prior Meetings

MOVED: By Mr. Reilly that the minutes of October 8, 2014 be approved as most recently distributed. Ms. Miller seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 4-0-3. (Mr. Zimbone, Mr. Lunetta and Mr. Flinton abstained since they had been absent from the October 8 meeting.)

Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 10: Appropriate for High School Renovation

Mr. Connelly stated that a memo from Ms. Gulati addressing the \$200,000 request had been circulated. He stated that he and Mr. Zimbone had toured the High School to observe the classrooms and the cafeteria in session. He stated one existing large classroom will be portioned to gain one additional classroom, and the world language lab and adjacent storage room will be reconfigured to become two classrooms. The \$200,000 expenditure will net three additional classrooms. He stated that the three classrooms are clearly needed, whether or not one agrees that a total of 15 additional classrooms is ultimately needed. Mr. Connelly stated that it is not clear whether the rooms being changed were considered instructional space in the DRA analysis.

Ms. Miller stated that the article asks for funds for engineering, design and construction. She asked who would be doing engineering and design. Mr. Connelly stated that Chip Laffey is doing the work in-house. Ms. Gulati stated that mechanical engineering may be needed for the HVAC and electrical work. Mr. Zimbone stated that the duct work needs to be fed into the storage area. Mr. Zimbone noted that some of the money will be used for buying the mobile technology cart. Mr. Lunetta asked if \$200,000 was appropriate for the additional classrooms. Mr. Zimbone stated that it was appropriate for the work that needs to be done. Mr. Reilly asked what would happen if the construction costs come in higher. Ms. Gulati stated that they will do the partition work, and then purchase the technology equipment only if there are funds available. She stated that the cost is \$40K-\$42K for typical mobile lab equipment. She stated that the devices could be laptop computers, Chromebooks or another device, which would affect the cost. There is some latitude to find a solution to meet the budget.

Mr. Zimbone stated that the tour was very helpful for understanding the big project. He stated that there need to be more alternatives than just the modulars in the courtyard. He stated that in the past, the Planning Board has objected to changing the footprint of the building, so the Schools came up with this plan. It was not based on any detailed engineering analysis or discussion of alternatives. He thinks they should go back to the Planning Board, which has changed. Mr. Connelly stated that the courtyard is an integral part of the design, and is a very nice feature.

Mr. Flinton asked whether 15 is the right number of classrooms needed. Mr. Zimbone stated that it is not clear, and questioned whether they were designing for one peak year. He stated that a better estimate is needed. He stated that Ms. Miller's point that many students are in gym class during the day should be factored in. Mr. Connelly stated that supporting the renovation project in Article 10 is not a commitment to what may be needed going forward.

Ms. Miller stated that the \$200K is an estimate, and asked that if funds are short, the School Department inform the Finance Committee before cutting programs. Mr. Zimbone stated that he was told that the most likely scenario would be to cut the mobile technology purchase, and to shuffle the regular technology budget around.

MOVED: By Mr. Zimbone that the Finance Committee recommend adoption of Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 10: Appropriate for High School Renovation. Mr. Reilly seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0.

Finance Committee Updates

The Chair stated that the Committee would not meet prior to the Special Town Meeting at 7:30 pm on October 27.

Adjourn

MOVED: By Mr. Zimbone that the Finance Committee meeting be adjourned, there being no further business. Mr. Lunetta seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0, at approximately 7:55 p.m.

Documents: Town of Needham Special Town Meeting Warrant for October 27, 2014;
Memorandum from Anne Gulati to the Finance Committee regarding October 2014 Warrant Article, dated October 14, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Mizgerd
Executive Secretary/Staff Analyst

Approved December 3, 2014