

Sutton Finance and Warrant Advisory Committee

March 26, 2015

Meeting Minutes

Committee Members:

Jeffrey Bannon, Chairman
Bruce Edwards
Stephanie Forsythe
Elizabeth Budzinski
Robert Recore
Diane Greenlaw
Randa Tawadros

Others:

Jim Smith, Town Administrator

Timothy Harrison, Town Accountant

Jennifer Hager, Town Planner

Theodore Friend, Sutton School Superintendent

Susan Rothermich, Sutton School Business Manager

Liisa Locurto, School Committee Chairperson

Meeting Start Time: 6:30 PM

Motion to continue the hearing from 3/25/15. Approved 7-0.

Motion to take warrant out and to address Articles 15-18. Approved 7-0..

Town Planner: Jennifer Hager

Article #15 : TIF

- Event Pro (6Harback Rd) would like to open a new operation at 9 Harback Rd
- New site is 21E site with severe contamination as listed by EPA
- Benefit to the town is that Event Pro will get a loan from the state to remediate the site environmentally and clean it up
- With the TIF they would not pay incremental taxes on the improvements to the land until after year 5 at which point it would be 50%

- Stressed that Event Pro has had a good working relationship with the Town for several years and it is considered a win-win for all parties involved

Article #16: Priority Development Sites

- 2 sites in town: Aggregate Site and Area on 146 where BlackStone Café is
- File with the state for PDS Status and would be able to receive funding for economic development
- Sewer and Water available from Millbury
- All abutters have signed off

Article #17: Hillside Drive

- Hillside Drive was built in Sutton in the 1990's
- Half of the lots were transferred properly and the other half were not
- It has been maintained as a public way since inception, however, it was never officially adopted by the town
- Need to adopt the roadway to validate the work that has been done over the past 25+ years
- Planning board gave their OK to the Board of Selectmen
- Selectmen to lay out the plan at Town meeting on 5/11/15

Article #18: Petition Article

- South Sutton Commerce Park has one vacant lot
- The owners would like to install a multi-story storage facility which is currently not allowed
- Fletcher, Tilton & Whipple of Worcester drafter the article that looks to re-define storage and stories
- If approved this type of storage facility would be allowed to be built on any land zoned 1B in Sutton not just specific to this site
- Going in front of the planning board at their meeting on 4/6/15

Sutton School:

- Went over budget overview and explained that this is a lean and level funded budget compared to last year
- Facing many challenges specifically with out of district placements because they are unpredictable
- Looking to add 1 Special Needs Teacher to SHS and 1 custodian position to cover increased size of new building
- Many of their grants and school choice money has been used to fund items but is now running out after several years

- There was a \$17,000 cut in funding from the state level which has negatively impacted the school
- Looking to make further cuts to staff in the kindergarten classrooms – would bring class size from approx. 22 students up to 25-27
- Also looking to cut virtual middle school (\$6,700 for 25 students)
- Possible cuts in extra-curricular activities, including JV sports, music, art programs
- Explained the need for “preventative maintenance” in order to insure the longevity of the new buildings
- Other options – raise sports fees (currently \$200 per sport, 3rd sport is fee), bus/transportation fees, expand the after-care program now that building is completed – all options would generate more revenue to close budget deficits
- Finance committee again suggested restructuring of health insurance plans and benefits to free up money
- Administration (4 principals, business manager, department heads) could receive 2% discretionary raises and are annually reviewed by T. Friend
- School Committee and Administration feel that it is not prudent to continue making cuts as it will hamper the development of education in younger ages
- Discussed possibility of using the Sutton DPW or Cemetery commission to do grounds keeping at the School Campus instead of having someone on staff (also the equipment – tractors, trucks, etc)

Warrant Articles 1-15

Article #1

- Town Report

Article #2

- Authorizes cemetery commission to employ themselves

Article #3

- Authorizes Board of Health members to employ themselves (in the past some members have been an inspector in town)

Article #4

- Funding the Sewer enterprise fund

Article #5

- Transfer Station

Article #6

- Town and School Budget approval

Article #7

- Capital plan and expenditures

Article #8

- Authorizing transfers within the budget

Article #9

- Funding the school department
- \$100,000 transfer of free cash

Article #10

- Review of Revolving Fund

Article #11

- Selectman have the authority to choose an aggregator of electricity for the residents and business
- Gives everyone the ability to sign up and have lower rates than with National Grid

Article #12

- Net Metering
- Went to bid for the electrical supplier willing to provide a net metering contract to the Town
- Next Sun Energy will give 30% off National Grid rates for years 1-10, and 35% off National Grid Rates years 11-20
- Requires Town Meeting Approval
- Example: Manchaug Fire Stations solar panels produce more power than they need which is now net metered to the Sutton Senior Central for approximately 50% savings (\$10,000 bill annually is now \$4,500)

Article #13

- Sewer department would like to change the wording of privilege fees to connection fees

Article #14

- Alterations of Bylaws that Conservation Commission follows

- Finance committee requested that Dan Moroney, Chairman of the Con Com, comes in at the next meeting to review the changes and give some explanation. Jim Smith to reach out and confirm.

Motion to defer warrant discussion to the next meeting. Approved 7-0.

Meeting Concluded: 8:24 PM

Next Meeting Scheduled: 4/16/15 @ 6:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Forsythe