

**Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
2/14/2017**

In attendance: Committee Members Anderson, Baltera, Belyea, Coughlin, Curley, Hancock, Haskell, Kelley, Kutsch, LaCroix, MacKay, Sharkansky, Smallwood, Strehle, and Taylor and Town Accountant Nickerson.

Chairman Taylor called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

**Questions from the public on items not on the agenda:** None

**Approval of Minutes**

Members approved the February 7, 2017 minutes with revisions on a 13-0 vote. Member Curley was not present for this vote.

**Financial forecast update and budget discussion with Town Administrator**

Town Administrator Ted Alexiades reviewed updates to the forecast. Revenue projections for both State aid and local receipts have been increased. The revised forecast also includes the Selectmen-voted operating budget for municipal departments, exclusive of the Town Administrator's recommended additions, plus the School Department's budget proposal with adjustments through the end of January. As a result, the FY 2018 budget currently projects a \$1.1 million shortfall. Alexiades also provided a summary of municipal department budget increases, with the salary allowances from Articles 4 and 5 included.

Up to \$1 million in one-time building permit fees that the Town will receive in FY 2017 are not reflected in the forecast. These projects will start generating tax revenue in FY 2019 and 2020. Alexiades noted that this year's reduction in the cost of employee health benefits is a one-time event, advising that the Town should anticipate 10% annual increases in future years.

When the Town sought voter approval for the Middle School override, it pledged both saved and ongoing Meals Tax revenue to mitigate the resulting tax increase. The Town allocates these savings to taxpayers across the board through \$500,000 in unused levy capacity. In the Town Administrator's opinion, maintaining the unused levy capacity is important to both honor that original commitment and to maintain voter confidence should the Town wish to seek taxpayer approval of any future debt exclusions.

Alexiades noted that the Town's costs for debt service will drop by about \$4 million over the next four years as excluded debt is retired. If it chooses, the Town has the capacity to take on additional capital projects with the additional debt capacity. The forecast will be updated again in late February/early March when additional information on State aid may become available.

**Warrant hearing and vote**

*Article DD – Acceptance of Easements*

Kelley noted that this Article enables the Selectmen to accept voluntarily granted easements over private property to complete roadway and other public works projects. AdCom members approved Article DD by a vote of 14-0-0.

**Liaison Updates**

AdCom Liaisons provided the following updates:

- Schools (Kutsch) – The School Committee voted 4-3 not to proceed with the High School Health and Wellness Center Warrant Article because the Committee's current top priority is Foster School.

- Sanctuary Community Warrant Article (Coughlin) – The citizens advancing this article are likely to withdraw it. There may be a Selectmen’s resolution instead of the Town Meeting Article.
- Naming of Lynch Field House (Taylor) – Article is being withdrawn.
- Planning (Baltera) – The Zoning Board of Appeals is continuing refinement of the proposed By-law amendment on nonconforming accessory structures. The Planning Board is refining language on three more of the proposed By-law amendments, which do not appear controversial. On the final article, the Planning Board appears to concur on the Zoning By-law amendment’s goal but is still considering how best to achieve that goal.

**Warrant hearing calendar review**

Chair Taylor pointed committee members to the AdCom section of the Town’s website for the most up-to-date versions of the group’s calendar and other documents.

The Committee voted unanimously to recess at 8:35 p.m., to await proponents currently addressing the Selectmen. Chair Taylor reconvened the Advisory Committee at 8:50 p.m.

**Warrant hearings**

*Article T – Leashing regulations at Bare Cove Park*

After Taylor summarized AdCom’s role in advising Town Meeting on budgets and warrant articles, Curley summarized this citizen proposal for permitting off-leash dog walking on alternate days in Bare Cove Park. The proposal includes provisions for a permit, along with rules for protecting environmentally sensitive areas in the Park, maintaining control over the dog, and picking up the dog’s waste.

Katie Sutton and Trish Cairns reviewed the sequence of events leading to the Selectmen’s 2-1 vote last fall to require leashing of all dogs in the Park and the proponents’ efforts to find an acceptable compromise permitting shared Park use. From the proponents’ perspective, the required permit represents an important educational opportunity for dog owners and the proposed approach addresses opponents’ concerns about unleashed dogs’ impacts on safety and the Park’s environment.

AdCom members discussed aspects of the Article including other available locations for off-leash dog walking, liability issues, permit administration, enforcement, environmental concerns, and safety.

Police Chief Glenn Olsson, with Animal Control Officer Leslie Badger, urged against permitting off-leash dog walking in the Park, citing safety and enforcement concerns. Research in 38 surrounding towns found that dogs must be leashed at all times in 68% of the surveyed communities.

Bare Cove Park Committee Chair Ted Matthews and Committee Member Susan Kains also spoke in opposition to off-leash dog walking at the Park, citing impacts on Park wildlife and environmentally sensitive areas.

Several proponents spoke in favor of the Article. In the proponents’ view, the proposed approach does address environmental concerns, excluding off-leash dogs from environmentally sensitive Park areas. The Park’s flatter terrain makes it attractive for off-leash dog walking, especially for dog owners with mobility issues.

*Article R – Harbor Improvements*

Coughlin outlined this Article’s three components including:

- \$240,000 to fund engineering design and permitting for three Town wharves (POW/MIA Park, the former Mobil Station parcel, and Barnes I wharf) using mooring permit reserves;

- \$16,000 for installation of a fifth flag pole on Whitney Wharf; and
- \$590,000 for the design, permitting, and construction of seawalls at Downer Avenue and Martin's Lane.

The funding source for the flag pole and seawall projects is the Town's General Fund.

Harbor Development Committee Chair Bill Reardon and Town Engineer Roger Fernandes responded to AdCom questions. Potential funding sources for eventual wharf construction costs include the Seaport Economic Council, mooring permit reserves, and Town bonds or reserves. Both the Downer Avenue and Martin's Lane seawall projects include costs for construction. The Downer Avenue project is maintenance and the Martin's Lane project is a total rebuild.

*Article S – Bathing Beach Bathhouse*

Coughlin noted that this Article would borrow \$350,000 from the Town's General Fund toward the anticipated \$1.2 million construction cost of the proposed new bathhouse/snack stand multipurpose building. These funds would be repaid annually from concessionaire rent payments and potential income from rental of the maritime room.

Bathing Beach Trustees Chris Daly and Ed Johnson responded to AdCom questions. Elements influencing construction costs include flood zone requirements, Historic Districts Commission requests, the building's iconic location on the harbor, and provision of utilities. Members questioned the project's cost and the decision to maintain the current bathhouse for storage.

**Matters not anticipated within 48 hours:** None

**Adjournment**

The Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 12:17 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna M. Smallwood  
Secretary

Documents:

Agenda - AdCom Meeting 2/14/2017

Draft Minutes - AdCom Meeting 2/7/2017

Warrant Article Status Summary 2/9/2017 9:30 LH

Five Year Forecast v1.4 dated 1/31/17

FY 2017 and FY2018 Budgets

Article R – Harbor Improvements

Article S – Bathing Beach Bathhouse

Article T – Leashing Regulations at Bare Cove Park

Article DD – Acceptance of Easements

Town of Hingham, Dog Leashing At Bare Cove Park, Proposed Article T – Glenn Olsson, Police Chief (slides)