

## **APPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

Middleton Finance Committee  
Regular Meeting  
Fuller Meadow School Teacher's Room  
July 12, 2010

The regular meeting of the Middleton Finance Committee was held on Monday, July 12, 2010 in the Teacher's Room of the Fuller Meadow School.

**Members Present:** Steve Cocciardi and Michelle Cresta; Co-Chairs, John Erickson, Jill Mann, George Dow, Toni Mertz and John Mahoney.

**Others Present:** Paula Lanfranchi, Recording Secretary.

### **Call to Order**

Meeting called to order at 7:39 pm by Co-Chair Steve Cocciardi.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

Minutes of the regular meeting of April 28, 2010 were presented for approval. George Dow presented a correction on page 2 – the misspelling of M. Cresta's name.

*Motion by J. Erickson to approve the minutes of the regular meeting on April 28, 2010 with correction as noted. Second by G. Dow. Motion carried 7-0-0.*

### **Discussion of JCC Land Purchase**

Discussion began with regard to the JCC property located off of East Street. M. Cresta reported that the land is currently under contract with a private buyer. As she understands it, the P&S has already been signed, but they have not yet closed. Jill Mann stated that the parcel includes 42 lots, connected to another 10 lots, which are connected to another 8. It is the largest contiguous property in town. She also stated that a \$4 million dollar open space purchase is just not viable for the town right now – we are not wealthy enough.

J. Mahoney stated that he thought the town's interest was to purchase the recreational space contained within the parcel. Both J. Mann and S. Cocciardi responded that it was not a likely option at this point – the current sale was for the purchase of all parcels or nothing. The sellers were not interested in breaking it up.

J. Erickson discussed the Master Plan Committee, which appointed a Land Acquisition Subcommittee to be involved in purchase matters such as this. The Subcommittee was charged with reviewing the feasibility of the Town to purchase all or a portion of the 87 acres of land and buildings currently owned by the Jewish Community Center of the North Shore. J. Mann suggested the option of amending the Town Charter to specifically require notification to the Master Plan Committee of any and all potential parcels for sale, which would then generate a communication to the Finance Committee. The process needs to be reinforced. J. Erickson stated that the Town needs the best qualified committees to be informed of what is going on – in this case the Master Plan Committee.

## **Masco Teacher's Contract Settlement**

M. Cresta reported that an agreement had been reached between the Masconomet School Committee and its teachers. They agreed on a three year contract, with a 7% salary increase over the next three years (Plus Steps and Level increases). As a concession, teachers have agreed to pay an additional 1% towards health insurance costs for the first year and then 2% and 3%, respectfully, the remaining two years .

S. Cocciardi expressed his concern with the Masconomet School Committee balancing the needs of the teachers and students with the financial realities and abilities of the Tri-towns, in the near future. He stated that they made a choice to pay up at this level, when state revenues are down, town revenues are down, and the school population is basically flat.

J. Erickson said he would like to gather information from the Masconomet School Committee how they intend to fund it. He stated that in October, each town will know its contribution percentage based on October 1 enrollment for each of the three communities. He suggested that the School Committee has a choice on how to approach this budget season. The last five years went reasonably well.

S. Cocciardi commented that the decision to approve this contract at these levels, are not in line with any recent salary reviews for any Middleton departments. Middleton salaries overall have remained flat. J. Erickson stated this will be epic – if we pay the increases, it's not going to stop. S. Cocciardi responded that this is simply financially unsustainable. J. Erickson agreed.

J. Mann stated that she was stunned to learn teachers would receive this over the next three years. At minimum, she thought maybe 0/0/2 for the three years.

G. Dow suggested coordinating with the three towns to attend a Masconomet School Committee meeting to discuss. J. Erickson stated he will call the Finance Committee representatives in Boxford and Topsfield this week to discuss. He will also contact Sue Givens and ask her to produce copies of the Teacher Contracts for the last 3 years. He commented that Sue Givens has been very straightforward in the past. The issue seems to be with the School Committee, so it will be important for the Finance Committees to sit in front of them and ask the questions that need to be asked.

## **Finance Committee Reorganization**

S. Cocciardi informed members of the Finance Committee that it was time to make the annual election for Chairperson(s) of the Finance Committee.

*Motion by J. Mann to appoint S. Cocciardi and M. Cresta to continue as Co-Chairs of the Finance Committee. Second by J. Erickson. Motion carried 7-0-0.*

## **Other**

S. Cocciardi reminded members of the Finance Committee about the changes to the Open Meeting Law Policies that went into effect on July 1, 2010. He asked P. Lanfranchi to highlight the top 10 changes in the new law:

1. All persons serving on public committees are to receive the Attorney General's version of Open Meeting Law;

2. 48 hour meeting notice is still required, but now cannot count Saturdays, Sundays or holidays.
3. Meeting notices must include a list of topics reasonably anticipated to be discussed at the meeting.
4. E-mails are expressly included in definition of “deliberation” which is prohibited outside of open session.
5. Attendance by a quorum at a location is not a “meeting” if not intended to conduct business and no deliberation occurs (i.e. attending a conference or social event).
6. Minutes must contain more detailed information including summaries of matters discussed, list of documents used and all decisions made and actions taken.
7. Documents and other exhibits shall be included along with the minutes and be part of the record.
8. The Chair is required to periodically review executive session minutes to determine if they should be released or if it is still relevant to keep minutes confidential.
9. Attorney General will assume broad interpretation and enforcement authority over Open Meeting Law; District Attorneys no longer involved.
10. Citizens making complaints of Open Meeting Law violation must file written complaint with the public body first. Then the body submits reply to complainant and Attorney General’s Office.

There was brief discussion about the new posting format, and P. Lanfranchi agreed to resend to members of the Finance Committee the Open Meeting Law changes distributed by I Singer last month.

M. Cresta stated that the Finance Committee needs to start posting agendas and approved meeting minutes on the Town’s website, and wondered who to contact about that. Matt Armitage is currently the Town’s volunteer webmaster, and an appointed member of the Finance Committee can get access through Virtual Town Hall to post any relevant information. P. Lanfranchi agreed to contact M. Armitage about this and it was suggested that D. Fullerton of the Board of Health could also be of assistance.

### **Future Meeting Schedule**

No date has been set yet for the next meeting; however, an item to be placed on the agenda includes Reserve Strategy, and K. Prentakis should be invited to offer his input.

*There being no further business, J. Erickson moved to adjourn the meeting of the Finance Committee at 8:40 pm.*

Respectfully Submitted,

Paula Lanfranchi  
Recording Secretary