



**Town of Amherst
Special Town Council Meeting
Finance Committee Public Hearing – FY20 Budget
May 21, 2019 6:30 p.m.
Large Activity Room, Bangs Community Center
70 Boltwood Walk**

Minutes

Complete video is available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWyl4zu13Vs&t=7s>

1. Call to order and declaration of a quorum

President Griesemer declared the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
Councilor Steinberg called the meeting of the Finance Committee to order at 6:30 p.m.

Councilors present: Councilors Brewer, De Angelis, DuMont, Griesemer, Hanneke, Pam, Ross, Ryan, Schoen, Schreiber, Steinberg, Swartz.

Councilors absent: Councilor Bahl-Milne

Councilors participating remotely: None

Others present: Clerk of the Council Margaret Z. Nartowicz, Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Interim Finance Director Sonia Aldrich

President Griesemer announced audio and video recording by Amherst Media.

2. Hearings

Councilor Steinberg welcomed everyone to the Finance Committee Public Hearing, provided introductory remarks and gave a brief overview of the budget review and adoption process.

Town Manager Paul Bockelman – Budget presentation. The budget is uploaded to the budget webpage on the Town's website. Recognition of Ms. Aldrich and the Finance staff, School Administration, Library Director and others for their work on the budget. Explained complete financial picture for the Town. Presenting a balanced budget with no reserves used to balance the budget. Overview of revenue sources, expense budget segments, and expense drivers. Explained that municipal budget would be examined at this budget hearing. Overview of enterprise funds, expenditures by type with personnel and

benefits representing the majority of costs. New Council budget that includes Councilor salaries and expenses. Collective bargaining negotiations are ongoing. Increases are not included in department budgets, but there is a salary reserve for collective bargaining agreement adjustments. Overview of various municipal departments' budget increases, investment in plans, projects, infrastructure and buildings, including new capital investments in buildings – DPW, Fire, Elementary School. Budget timeline review.

Councilor Steinberg called for questions and comments from the Council.

Councilor Pam – question on North Amherst intersections. Mr. Bockelman responded that a traffic study is in progress and the Planning Department is working on it.

Rosemary Cowell of 104 Dana Street had a question regarding the May 23 Finance Committee meeting. Andy responded with clarification on the specifics of upcoming meetings and votes.

David Robertson of 39 Northampton Road asked about payments made to UMass and Amherst College for Town operations. Mr. Bockelman responded not enough, but that some payments are made.

A resident of Northampton Road asked about the 7.7% municipal operating increase. 7.7% increase in tax bill? Mr. Bockelman responded that no, Prop 2 ½ restricts tax levy increase to 2 ½%. Councilor Steinberg added that water and sewer rates will be independently considered and voted upon by Council. Explained nature of water and sewer enterprises.

Hallie Hughes of 30 Orchard Street asked about transportation decrease and relation to PVTA. Mr. Bockelman explained funding for service routes. Ms. Aldrich added that transportation enterprise funds pay for transportation capital. Parking fees are a major revenue source for the Transportation enterprise fund. Discussion regarding transportation fund impacts.

Katharine Troast of 99 Dana Street asked about transportation to New York and whether the PVTA could provide a direct link from Amherst to the Northampton train station.

A resident of Northampton Road asked about the deadline to vote the budget. President Griesemer responded that she expects the Council to vote by June 20. Councilor Steinberg added that the FY20 proposed budget book is available online at www.amherstma.gov. Gave examples of information contained in the proposed budget. Appendices, including on transportation data, are included. President Griesemer added that the school and library budgets are also available online.

Rosemary Cowell of 104 Dana Street asked about the budget adoption timeline. President Griesemer explained what she expects for Council actions, dependent upon Finance Committee process. Councilor Steinberg added that several attendees may be here because of CPAC proposals. CPA votes do not have to be linked with budget votes. President Griesemer stated that when it comes to CPA, Council can vote all, or separately on the various proposals. Councilor Steinberg stated that the Council cannot fund anything that wasn't requested, but it can choose to not fund items that are requested. Councilor Brewer made a clarification on Council meeting dates. President Griesemer clarified regular meetings will be on June 3 and June 17.

Councilor Steinberg opened the floor for public comment.

William Kaizen of 32 Goldenrod Circle expressed appreciation to the Town Manager for keeping money in the budget for roads and sidewalks.

Katharine Sims of 77 Dana Street offered comments regarding the 132 Northampton Rd project. Councilor Steinberg explained what will happen at that Finance Committee meeting. CPAC will present and public comments will be welcome. It is Finance Committee's opportunity to hear why CPAC is making their various recommendations. Ms. Sims urged a delayed vote on the Valley CDC funding. Project seems to potentially impact Town costs. Meaningful input on 2016 Housing Production Plan has not really happened. Maybe this will be the opportunity to provide input. Cited sections of HPP regarding public input. Request Council incorporate public input prior to making a decision.

A resident of Northampton Rd asked why the amount for funding the project is not in the budget. Ms. Aldrich explained that it is a borrowing authorization, but debt service payments are not there yet. Councilor Steinberg and Mr. Bockelman noted that page 189 of budget book shows the Town's debt service. Councilor Steinberg added that the borrowing authorization would affect the budget in the future.

David Robertson of 39 Northampton Rd, and Physician and Master's in Public Health, expressed his supports of affordable housing. One lesson in field of medicine is that doing things with good intentions doesn't necessarily have positive outcomes. Attended meeting on April 24. Mr. Robertson expressed concerns regarding transportation and access to community services, and social services for residents. The majority of residents will have limited transportation. This population might be homeless or under care of department of mental health, far from transportation. Safety concern with no sidewalks to shopping. One possible solution would be for Valley CDC to offer shuttle service. Proposed expansion with sidewalks on Rt. 9 may alleviate some of the concern. Optimistic timeline for that is 2023. During that construction, residents will be further interrupted. Social service concerns – often severe mental illness or substance abuse issues. Twelve out of 28 will be actively homeless or under DMH care. What onsite services will be available for residents in crisis (relapse)? Valley CDC said a day manager would be available. Nothing overnight. The Town acknowledges this is an at-risk population. Homeless women are a specific population at risk. High percentage have been victims of abuse. How will Valley CDC protect women when 70% of residents will be men? This SRO would be the largest that Valley CDC has ever operated. President Griesemer responded that at some point a community conversation will have to be held to come up with resolution on how to move forward from where we are today. Need to look at all the issues from all perspectives. Before the Council can go forward, this needs to happen. Councilor Steinberg added that during the Finance Committee's budget hearing, the role of the Finance Committee is to look at financial aspects. Councilor Brewer added that one of the reasons for the conversation is that the Council needs to understand its role. Explained roles of ZBA, Town Manager (CEO), and Council. The only way the Council can participate is with regard to funding.

Katharine Troast of 99 Dana Street – submitted written concerns, and President Griesemer turned them over to Clerk of Council for distribution later. Ms. Troast commented that she is concerned that residents want to be heard.

A resident of Northampton Road commented that she would like to hear perspective from potential residents.

Hallie Hughes of 33 Orchard Street asked to delay until there is a consensus and explanation.

Melissa Porter of 110 Dana Street commented that she has worked in this field for many years. Predominantly funded by DMH. There is a knee-jerk response about this. Many problems associated with these SROs. Look at Valley CDC with a discerning eye. Disservice for folks living there, and strain on the community. Amherst needs a middle cross-section socio-economic population. Need to define affordable housing. Councilor Pam asked about how that \$500,000 works. Ms. Aldrich responded that the

borrowing authorization must be paid back from the CPA surcharge. That means less available for other projects due to debt service payments. Councilor Steinberg explained other anticipated capital projects and debt exclusion.

A resident asked about financing for the project. Mr. Bockelman explained the requested commitment of funds for the project. A resident commented that the financial aspect does not necessarily address the social concerns. Councilor Steinberg responded that there are separate but interrelated issues. There will be separate processes to address a multitude of issues. Borrowing authorization would require 2/3 vote.

A resident of Dana Street asked about a delay on the Council vote, what would next step be? President Griesemer responded that the project isn't necessarily dependent on Town funding. Discussion re: role of ZBA. Ms. Aldrich explained debt authorization versus funding other CPA articles.

James Schlessinger of 93 Dana Street commented that the Valley CDC said at the April 24 meeting, that they did not have enough clients and that they would be searching a much larger area to fill the units. Discussion of the ZBA process.

Katharine Sims of 77 Dana Street expressed appreciation to the Council for studying this issue.

Councilor Steinberg thanked all attendees for their input, and again reviewed the budget process. He noted the value of the information provided at the public hearing.

An attendee expressed the need for the Town to be fiscally conservative while being sensitive to a vulnerable population.

Councilor Steinberg adjourned the Public Hearing.

3. Adjourn

MOVED: Councilor Ryan moved, second by Councilor Schoen to adjourn.

VOTED 12-0 (Councilors Brewer, De Angelis, DuMont, Griesemer, Hanneke, Pam, Ross, Ryan, Schoen, Schreiber, Steinberg, and Swartz voted Yes; Councilor Bahl-Milne was absent) to adjourn at 8:15 p.m. on May 22, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,



Margaret Z. Nartowicz
Town Clerk & Clerk to the Council

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented

Town Budget FY20 Presentation 05-21-2019 FINAL (003)