

Advisory Committee
May 22, 2013
Felix Juliani Meeting Room, Town Hall

David Murphy called the meeting of the Wellesley Advisory Committee to order at 7:30 p.m. Those present included Thomas Engels, Becky Engles, Marjorie Freiman, Ann-Marie Gross, Laura Hockett, John Hussey, Catherine Johnson, Phil Licari, Andy Patten, Ann Rappaport, Deb Robi and Rich Woerner.

Lucy Kapples entered the meeting at 8:09 p.m.

David Murphy, Chair, acknowledged members of the junior class of Wellesley High School in attendance.

Citizen Speak

None.

Approval of Minutes

No minutes were submitted for approval.

Election of Chair for Fiscal Year

Laura Hockett made a motion to have Marjorie Freiman assume the role of Chair for the Advisory Committee for fiscal year 2014. Catherine Johnson seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

Update on School Strategic Planning and School Facilities

KC Kato, Vice Chair of the Wellesley School Committee, gave an overview of the strategic plan. She stated there had been a large amount of community research completed with 317 citizens participating. A survey had 1559 responses. Review showed the school had a strong curriculum with good educators who were doing well educating the students. Improvement was needed in continued professional development of educators, focusing on all students equally, integrating new skills and efficient and effective use of resources. Several initiatives were identified and plan development will commence with implementation expected in the fall. Costs will be incorporated into the budget.

The facilities plan was created using SMMA research from earlier in the year. A fifteen year framework was established to allow integration into the strategic plan and the Town-wide plan. A working group is being established and goals formulated. Areas of concern include enrollment changes, problems with aging buildings, technology issues, feasibility of funding and flexibility for future needs. Community feedback will be encouraged. High priority projects need to be recognized. The School is anticipating this item will be presented at the next Town Meeting in December.

Questions were taken from the committee members.

Review of Fiscal Year 2013 and Suggestions for Improvement

David Murphy, Chair, asked for suggestions for improvement from the Committee members. He discussed three phases to include boards explaining their procedures and goals, presentations of capital and operating budgets, and review of articles on the Town Meeting warrant. He stated since there would be a Town Meeting in early December, there would be a shortened time for getting new members to the Committee orientated. He also feels it would be useful for Advisory to ask how each board recognizes they are doing a good job and request the metrics they feel are important. He felt the concept of a report card might be useful. He also felt that boards should explain the necessity for any late item for the warrant and why it was not anticipated earlier in the year. It might be beneficial to combine some boards and have a team review.

Ann-Marie Gross advised the orientation process may possibly be too long for existing Board members. She felt improvement was needed in relaying to the various Boards the expectations for submitting finalized reports in a timely manner to assist with printing of final product for the Annual Town Meeting. She feels the liaison will need to make it quite clear the dates for submission with each board. It is also important for each liaison to prepare their board to anticipate the questions that might be asked and have the answers ready at the presentations. Some liaisons may have to attend more than one board's meetings as part of their function. She also felt it was important to review with new Advisory members the items which have been in process for some time such as the Tolles-Parsons Center. It is important to balance the budget and projects to avoid tax increases.

Laura Hockett felt early start times of some of the meetings for orientation was beneficial. Prioritizing with the larger aspects of the budget in mind is important. She also feels it is a good idea to establish the role of a liaison and set expectations. She also felt there were items on the warrant that were not anticipated earlier in the season.

Becky Epstein felt it is important to establish the expectations for each board and resolve issues with the budget. She also felt it was important to educate the various boards on the role of the liaison.

Tom Engles felt the orientation materials were interesting, but questioned if everyone needed to hear it again. He feels some prioritizing by the size of budget is necessary and those departments and boards with budgets within the guidelines did not require the same amount of time for review. He felt it was frustrating this year to not have the time to review thoroughly any late budget submissions.

Phil Licari advised the role of the liaison should include being part of the budget development including making some elements in the budget detail more efficient.

Catherine Johnson felt the guidelines established by the Board of Selectmen seemed to drive this year's budget process. She feels a firmer schedule will help especially with non-budgetary items on the warrant. It may be too intrusive to have a group as opposed to one liaison.

Ann Rappaport stated it was difficult as a new member to recognize how a small assumption could change the budget greatly. She feels the sources and uses are important for understanding the nuances of the budget, and recommends regular updates of the sources and uses statement. She felt Dropbox worked very well in preparing the Advisory Report and felt the Committee could manage to use it without running afoul of the Open Meetings Law.

John Hussey stated it was important to give a clear expectation of what was needed in each board presentation including the matrix used to formulate each budget. The five-year capital plan should be considered especially for any tax impacts.

Andy Patten agreed that prioritizing larger budgets is important and the roles of the liaison need to be addressed. He feels there are different levels of participation with each board. He also felt it was important to keep the tax impact in mind when reviewing budget items.

Deb Robi would like a review to determine if each board or committee needed a liaison.

Liaison Reports

David Murphy, Chair, asked for liaison reports and various members of the Advisory Committee provided their reports.

Meeting Schedule for Balance of Fiscal Year 2013

David Murphy, Chair advised there would be another meeting on June 5, 2013 and an inter-board meeting on June 13, 2013. He also announced an end-of-year party on June 12, 2013.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:26 p.m.

Documents: Agenda