

Advisory Committee Meeting – February 29, 2020

Todd Cook, Bill Maynard, Julie Bryan, Betsy Roberti, Deed McCollum, John Lanza, Lina Musayev, Ralph Tortorella, Paul Merry, Patti Quigley, Neal Goins, Jennifer Fallon, Mary Scanlon, Mary Gard, Rusty Kellogg.

Todd Cook called the meeting to order at 9:00am

Citizen speak

Donna Ticchi speaks about Article 43.

Citizen speaking on behalf of Article 42; Italian American in favor of indigenous Peoples Day.

Discussion and vote on Warrant Articles

Julie Bryan and Patti Quigley seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 42.

- Discussion included an expression of concern by advisory members that it is difficult to determine which facts are true or untrue and should we even try to discuss all the conflicting information as we discuss it.
- A member expressed the idea that no matter the amount and quality of texts, history can be viewed very differently, so there isn't going to be a set of facts that we can absolutely 100% rely on, so there is no easy way to deal with the conflicting facts we have been presented.
- We have all gotten a lot of information on these issues and what occurred when Columbus came to the North American continent.
- Because it seems to be based on personal opinion, how do we come to a vote as a committee?
- There is an option to comment on the articles without providing a recommendation if that is what we choose.
- A member expressed the fact that the School Committee should be weighing in on this issue since the Town will likely want to hear from them on their view as to whether we should change the day to Indigenous Peoples Day, since they will have a great effect on how we teach our children.
- Some advisory members believe we should provide comments but not a vote; others believe we have an obligation to advise the Town by voting.

- Discussion as to whether advisory can provide an analysis on this issue that can help Town Meeting make a decision.
- Comment from one member that Advisory has gotten a lot of information that the Town Meeting members will not get, and though it is not something that is easily decided.
- Comment from one member that with regard to the schools, the curriculum changes all the time, and it depends on history, cultural changes, etc. It's already being taught to some extent in the schools, and if we change the day, there will likely be more education about it, but they will wait to see what the Town will do.
- A member commented that Advisory should vote, and individual members can abstain, but we have a responsibility to vote.
- Another member expressed support for voting and not merely commenting.
- There is an acknowledgement of the strong opinions and emotion surrounding this issue.
- Discussion continued as advisory members grappled with the difference between honoring civil war generals as compared with honoring Columbus; not the same because Columbus did have some positive things he did for which he is honored.
- An advisory member commented that we do know various things, and one of the things we do know is whether Columbus was responsible for genocide, etc., he was instrumental in initiating a number of processes that led to elimination of the indigenous peoples.
- A member expressed that this is really a matter of the heart, and that's the difficulty in coming to a recommendation for the Town as a committee, asserting that we have no business telling anyone how to vote their heart. We should provide the information we have received and let the TMMs vote their heart.
- Expression of respect for the committee taking such an issue so seriously and an understanding of the acrimony that might result. But, support for taking a vote on both articles, rather than just providing comments.
- Expression that a recognition of Indigenous Peoples Day and removal of Columbus Day is not meant to discredit Columbus the explorer, or the man, but he does represent the beginning of the colonization of North America and the genocide of indigenous people. Columbus will not be removed from history or the history books.

- A member expressed the fact that there are alternatives to having both on the same day, and voting in favor of Article 42 may continue to drive a wedge between people, and perpetuates a cycle of racism. We can find a compromise that isn't so divisive. The vote and article doesn't do justice to the situation because it doesn't solve the problem.
- Many committee members expressed a desire to continue to recognize Italian Americans and the importance they have in Wellesley in addition to the nation as a whole.
- Comment whether it is a unanimous view of the indigenous people that having both on the same day is not acceptable, so they are looking for an "all or nothing" decision – either Indigenous Peoples Day alone, or nothing. Article 43 is not a better solution than the current solution. Is this the case for all the proponents of Article 42?
- Comment that it feels like it is choosing between two groups in Town and that makes it difficult.
- Another member commented that it doesn't feel like we are choosing between one group and another, but a choice for justice. It is an opportunity to make a statement that has some impact, and about what is just.
- Comment that Italian Americans are the second largest group of persons that were lynched in this country. Italians cling to Columbus Day because there were 11 people lynched in new Orleans, and the President declared Columbus Day to help ease tensions between Italian Americans and the establishment. It is important to remember that this issue is not just opening up wounds for indigenous people, but also for Italian Americans.
- Another comment that there are possible alternatives that wouldn't cause such divisiveness in the Town.
- Todd Cook called the vote.

Vote: 8 yes, 2 no, 4 abstentions.

Julie Bryan moved and Mary Scanlon seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 43.

- Comment by advisory member that neither Article 42 or 43 are in our wheelhouse and we shouldn't be voting on them.

Vote: 1 yes, 9 no, 4 abstentions (after one member changed from a no vote to an abstention).

5 minute break called by the chair.

Meeting called back to order. One member is absent but will be returning later in the afternoon.

Julie Bryan moved and Mary Scanlon seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 29.

- Member noted that he was abstaining as a member of the Board on the Historical Commission.

Vote: 12 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Lina Musayev seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 30.

- No discussion

Vote: 13 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Mary Scanlon seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 31.

- Comment by member that there should be some escalation in the warrant article.
- Another comment was that the GRD was all in the 10,000sf district.
- Comment that Planning said they could possibly treat the GRD differently and do an escalation by lot size rather than just treat it as a 10,000sf district.

Vote: 13 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Bill Maynard seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 41.

- Comment regarding whether the proponents of Article 41 would withdraw the article if Article 31 passed.
- Comment that the restrictions are too strict because they include strict prohibitions.
- One member commented that he was in favor of 41, but only if article 31 fails.
- We all observe that there is a need for something to help close the loophole, and Advisory is in favor of using the large house review for that purpose. Some advisory members view Article 41 as a backstop in case Article 31 does not pass.
- Concern that if neither pass, then we will continue to have a loophole for another year, or at least until another Town Meeting.

Vote: 0 yes, 13 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Patti Quigley seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 32.

- Discussion regarding whether the article goes too far in trying to mitigate tree removal, such that it becomes more punitive.
- Concern that there is no enforcement of the current tree bylaw and that should be fixed first before we start imposing additional restrictions.
- Planning Board representative addresses concerns.
  - Many citizens have asked that the law go farther, so that led to the revision
  - There was discussion among departments
- Planning Board voted unanimously in favor of the article in their meeting.
- Bylaw gives the option to either replace the tree(s) or contribute to the tree bank, or a combination.
- There are two different funds – one for public trees and one for replacing trees.
- Concern that by removing the hazardous tree provision that we are incentivizing people to leave trees that may not be stable.
- There is an exemption for emergency tree removal. Point of the bylaw is to prevent abuse of the hazardous tree provision.

Vote: 12 yes, 1 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Mary Gard seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 33.

- Member summarized the fact that the bylaw is looking to preserve open space in areas with five lots or more. Under current bylaws, it is restrictive enough that it prevents what was intended by the bylaw, which was to allow cluster housing.
- In one instance, the developer couldn't do what they wanted to do, so the developer did a 40B project and the developer clearcut all the lots, making it worse than what would have been before.
- Concern raised that the bylaw does not apply to general residence districts.
- Planning Board representative said that it would be redundant because it applies to any property (even in the aggregate).

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Mary Scanlon seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 34.

No discussion

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Deed McCollum seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 35.

No discussion

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Ralph Tortorella seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 36.

- Advisory member explained the background for this Article.

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Paul Merry seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 37.

- Question raised as to what they would want to be called in the singular if this passes.
- Likely to be “select board member” or “member of the select board”

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Lina Musayev seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 38.

- No discussion

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Paul Merry seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 39.

- Question raised as to whether using “they” or “their” is grammatically correct.
- One member said the AP Style has accepted it as proper.

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Chair called a brief recess.

Julie Bryan moved and Neal Goins seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 6.

- Discussion on what was the percent increase of the salary over last year.
- Question regarding why we vote only on the Town Clerk’s salary.
- It used to be fixed by bylaw and could only change by TM vote.
- Only elected position that has a salary.

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Discussion over which articles to discuss and vote.

Julie Bryan moved and Mary Scanlon seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 8, Motion 1.

- Noted that this has been the same for about 15 years
- Noted that it is higher than many municipalities that have their own municipal electric system
- It has been considered whether to provide more or less than \$1,000,000 in previous years.
- Residents see the benefit of this money, but to provide more to the Town in cash would mean a potential increase in rates to customers, so this has been deemed the correct number.

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Jennifer Fallon seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 12.

- The liaison provided a summary and background on the Baler stabilization fund

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Jennifer Fallon seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 13.

- The liaison provided background and a summary for the Morses Pond Stabilization Fund
- This is a way to raise money instead of asking for a large capital outlay for the whole amount
- This was a course suggested by the Finance Dept., partly in case there was some emergency (although it's not anticipated)
- Expected to make a capital request in 2024-2025
- It will have to be voted every year

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Bill Maynard seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 14.

- Summary of article by liaison

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Mary Gard seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 15.

- Summary of article by liaison

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Neal Goins seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 18.

- MOTION WITHDRAWN BEFORE DISCUSSION AND VOTE BECAUSE NUMBER WAS WRONG

Julie Bryan moved and Neal Goins seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 18.

- Has PBC talked to BOS and Finance about these numbers?
- BOS is actually the sponsor of the project but it has to go through the PBC, so they are aligned.
- There's no reference to FY21, presumably because they need this right away
- There was discussion about why we need the Annex and the fact that it is part of the larger TH project
- Part of the PBC discussion was surrounding the extremely high cost of the TH interior renovation, but the cost is going down and there is a supplemental study to try and keep the costs down
- Comment about why the Annex is so far from TH?
- Three reasons – no room on TH property; The MLP campus is already owned by the Town; this would allow the Town to consolidate several departments into a single location

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Lina Musayev seconded a motion for favorable action on Article 24.

- Discussion regarding concern from residents that there might be confusion with Warren Park and the Warren building with another thing named Warren.

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Article 8, Motion 2

Will not discuss Omnibus budget because some numbers are still in flux. Can vote supportive/unsupportive on certain budgets

Julie Bryan moved and Jennifer Fallon seconded a motion to express support for the FY21 operating budget for the Sustainable Energy Committee, which is 73.58% over FY20 and therefore over guideline.

- They need the additional FTE (.2) to support the Town's climate action plan and to apply for grants, among other things
- A member noted that the percentage of the budget increase is deceptively high given the small overall budget
- Members discussed the important work of the SEC and that this request is necessary to move forward with the climate action plan and to implement that plan.

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Mary Gard seconded a motion to express support for the FY21 budget for the Town Clerk's Office, which is 18.23% over FY20, and therefore over guideline.

- It was noted that the vast majority of the additional funds requested are required for the five elections that will occur in FY21 (including the general election, statewide election and local elections).
- It was also noted again that the increase appears high because of the scale of such a small overall budget.

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Lina Musayev seconded a motion to express support for the FY21 budget for the Planning Board, which is 4.57% over FY20, and therefore over guideline.

- The increase is almost all due to increase in personnel expenses
- There was almost a complete turnover in staff, and the new budget reflects the salaries of the staff already in place, which was necessary to get those new people in place.
- Overall operating expense is only increasing about 1%
- What about the savings from the time when positions were unfilled? That would be turnback funds to the Town.

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Julie Bryan moved and Lina Musayev seconded a motion to express support for the FY21 budget for the Schools, which is 4.76% over FY20, and therefore over guideline.

- Noted that the BOS have decided that they would find source for funds of \$664,000 which would bring the budget percentage to 3.82% over FY20 budget.
- Some members believed that given the constraints of the collective bargaining agreements and the significant out-of-district special education costs, the budget was lean.
- Some members were concerned about the new approach to special education implemented this year and that the School Department will face future budgeting challenges.
- Some members expressed concern that the Board of Selectmen have to use free cash every year for unanticipated special education costs.
- Advisory also discussed that though elementary enrollment level is decreasing, there has been no direct effect on costs.
- Some concern expressed that grant recipients were put on the payroll and this could be a “back door” way of getting additional FTEs.
- Discussion regarding the fact that benefits were going down despite an increase in overall FTEs. School budget shows that the vast majority of new FTEs do not have benefits, so the reduction in certain staff that did have benefits and the fact that many new FTEs do not qualify for benefits (increase to part time workers that don’t qualify, increase in grant recipients who receive benefits from federal government and not the Town, and additional paraprofessionals who do not receive benefits) results in overall decrease in benefits.
- Some members expressed that enrollment reductions may only be realized once there is consolidation of the elementary schools, or once the lower population of elementary students reach middle school, and benefits to the budget may not be seen for five to ten years.
- Some members recommend the School Committee reevaluate special education, and think about future planning, considering whether all programs are still necessary.
- Some members thought that the Schools could manage level services and contracts better for even more efficiency in the future.

Vote: 14 yes, 0 no, 0 abstention

Administrative matters

Discussion of upcoming agenda items for March 4 and 11.

Discussion of articles that still require discussion and vote.

Motion to adjourn was moved and seconded.

Motion passed, 14-0-0.

Meeting adjourned at 1:55pm.