

Approved April 1, 2019

**Advisory Committee Meeting
Faculty Dining Room, Wellesley Middle School
Tuesday, March 26, 2019, 6:30 p.m.**

Those present from the Advisory Committee included Julie Bryan, Todd Cook, Rose Mary Donahue, Mary Gard, Bill Maynard, Paul Merry, Dave Murphy, Lina Musayev, Betsy Roberti, Tom Skelly and Andrea Ward.

6:32 p.m. Citizen Speak

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

6:32 p.m. Discussion re: Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles

1. Department of Public Works re: Article 22 (Sprague Turf Field)

Dave Cohen, Director, Department of Public Works (DPW), presented. Jeff Wechsler, Chair, Board of Public Works, was also present.

Advisory had some questions at its last meeting about the additional costs for this article now that the actual bids had come in for the artificial turf field replacement at Sprague fields. Originally, with an estimated project cost of \$1 million, \$500,000 was to come from the Turf Field Fund and another \$500,000 would be borrowed inside the levy. Now, the total cost of the project is estimated at \$1.2 million, and \$700,000 would need to be borrowed. Have confirmed that the Community Preservation Act is not a potential funding source due to statutory restrictions on the use of those funds. The other potential source to make up the \$200,00 shortfall would be any remaining funds in Turf Field Fund over the \$500,000 that is scheduled to be drawn down for the project; that additional amount is currently approximately \$50,000, but will likely to continue to go up.

There was a question confirming that the Town had estimated that the Turf Field Fund would accumulate about \$50,000 in fees per year, so that it would build up to \$500,000 over ten years: Yes, but the Fund is actually accumulating closer to \$80,000 per year.

There was a request to break down the new estimated cost of the project: The actual cost based on the bids is now estimated at \$1,050,000, and the DPW has added a contingency of \$150,000, for a total cost of \$1,200,000. The elements of the project include replacing the two turf surfaces, replacing the pads underneath, and pulling out/replacing the infill. It is a straightforward project. DPW has added the roughly 10% contingency because they don't know what will be found once the field is opened up.

The advantage to using the extra \$50,000 in the Turf Field Fund would be that the Town could then reduce the borrowing to \$650,000. There was discussion about the fact that the amount authorized to be spent under Article 9 (revolving funds) from the Turf Field Fund is currently set at \$500,000; that number/motion would need to be revised in order to permit the use of the additional \$50,000 in the Turf Field Fund.

There was a question whether Finance had expressed any view on using the additional funds in the Turf Field Fund: That was not suggested by or discussed with Finance.

There was a question whether, in the DPW Director's judgment, there are any functional flaws in the fields and whether they are unsafe: The carpets are worn out and need to be replaced.

There was a question as to how comfortable DPW is that the actual cost of the project will equal the bids: No reason to believe that there will be "scope creep" for this project.

There was a brief discussion about the bids that came in and the fact that the successful bidder was a subcontractor who put down the original carpets.

There was a question whether there is any chance of materials coming up through the replacement carpets, as had occurred when the original carpets were installed: Very little chance of that; there is currently a cap under the carpet now that would prevent that.

On March 20, 2019, Advisory rescinded its earlier (February 27, 2019) vote on Article 22, given the existence of the new project numbers. Advisory decided to revote Article 22 with the revised project numbers.

Andrea Ward moved, and Julie Bryan seconded, favorable action on Warrant Article 22, as proposed by the Playing Fields Task Force and the School Committee, that the Town vote to appropriate \$1,200,000 (ONE MILLION TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS), to be expended under the direction of the Board of Public Works for design, architectural, engineering and other professional services, bid documents, construction services and all associated costs related to the replacement of the synthetic turf fields located at the Sprague School; with the funds to be raised as follows: \$500,000 (FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS) from the Turf Field Fund; and that the Treasurer, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, is authorized to borrow the sum of \$700,000 (SEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS).

The motion was approved, 9 to 1.

2. Motion to Amend Article 8, Motion 2

Town Meeting Members Elizabeth Lange and Jenn Fallon, sponsors of the amendment, were present. Also present were School Committee members Matt Kelley, Melissa Martin, Linda Chow, Sharon Gray, and Jim Roberti, as well as Dr. David Lussier, Superintendent, Wellesley Public Schools, and Cindy Mahr, Assistant Superintendent for Finance.

Ms. Lange and Ms. Fallon presented the latest version of the amendment, which had been reviewed by Town Counsel and others.

There was a question posed to the School officials about where/how benefits for the new Director of Libraries position were being accounted for: This position was already a benefitted position within the Schools budget (at 0.6 FTEs); the original proposal for FY20 would have added an additional 0.4 FTEs to the same position; benefits have already been counted.

There were several questions about the alternative funding sources/mechanisms that the School Committee had indicated it might be able to use to fund these items even with a 3.5%-increased budget: Those funding sources are speculative/uncertain; involves circuit breaker revenues; not sure the money will actually be there.

There was a question whether, if circuit breaker funds were carried over and used to fund the Director of Libraries position, would money then be taken away from special education: By law, use of circuit breaker funds must be tied to special education; if School Committee carried over the circuit breaker funds, they would be used for special education, which would in turn free up local dollars that would otherwise have gone to special education.

There was a question as to what caused the Director of Libraries position to become vacant: The individual retired; administration has attempted for two years to find a candidate for the 0.6 FTE position but has been unsuccessful.

There was a question as to what agreement will ensure that the funds will be used for this position and not something else: School Committee has been clear on intent of entire budget; no intent to change that; by state law, however, Town can't put constraints on how School Committee spends funds.

There was a question whether, if the position is not filled, the funds would be turned back: No intention to turn around and do something entirely different, but every year the Schools have financial ins and out, surpluses and deficits; might need those funds to offset deficits elsewhere.

There was a question about the amount of turnback in prior years: Last year, \$936,000 of General Fund money was turned back; the year before, it was \$60,000; the year before that, it was \$25,000. Last year was an abnormal year.

There was a request to clarify the math program: The request is \$40,000 to fund DreamBox software across all the schools; since all the elementary students end up at the Middle School, it will be difficult if the students' prior experiences aren't consistent.

There was a comment by an Advisory member expressing concern about the late presentation of this amendment; three weeks have elapsed since Advisory voted the 3.5%-increased budget, but only now, the night the budget is to be presented at Town Meeting, is this amendment being brought forward.

There was an additional comment that the idea of the Schools ever being able to put forward a budget that stayed within the 3.0% guideline increase was ludicrous.

Andrea Ward moved, and Paul Merry seconded, favorable action on the amendment to Article 8, Motion 2, as presented ("That line 320, instruction, be increased by \$154,887 from \$49,059,555 to \$49,214,442 and by also adding \$154,887 to the subsequent lines 'subtotal,' 'School Total' and 'All Personal Services & Expenses,' and to fund said amendment by an appropriation from free cash."). The motion failed, 6-5 (with the Chair voting to break the tie).

7:00 p.m. Adjourn

Todd Cook made and Rose Mary Donahue seconded a motion to adjourn at the adjournment of tonight's session of Annual Town Meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.