

APPROVED 9/2/2020

**Advisory Committee Meeting
Zoom Videoconferencing Platform
Wednesday, August 26, 2020, 7:00 p.m.**

Those present from Advisory Committee included Shawn Baker, Julie Bryan, Tom Cunningham, Lauren Duprey, Jake Erhard, Jennifer Fallon, Neal Goins, John Lanza, Jeff Levitan, Bill Maynard, Deed McCollum, Corrine Monahan, Patti Quigley, and Doug Smith.

Julie Bryan called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

7:00 p.m. KC Kato, Town Clerk swore in new members of Advisory Committee and asked new members to sign their appointment letter and send to the Town Clerk's office.

7:03 p.m. Citizen Speak

There was no one present for Citizen Speak.

7:04 p.m. Advisory Committee Orientation, Mark Kaplan, Moderator.

An orientation for new Advisory Committee members was provided. New members were thanked for stepping forward. In summary, Advisory is a resource for Town Meeting and functions as a check and balance on other committees in town. Advisory Committee deals with all matters coming before Town Meeting and is therefore different than a Finance and Appropriations Committee which focuses exclusively on budget and financial issues.

Article 11 of the town bylaws describes responsibilities and general duties of Advisory Committee. Articles 2 through 7 are also important.

It is unclear what the future holds for Town Meetings and some of the elements of the changed Town Meeting received positive feedback. The written Advisory Report will be that much more important for Town Meeting members (TMMs) as the format of Town Meeting may evolve. It is anticipated there will be an expanded use of the Consent Agenda which again will make the Advisory Report more important.

There was a discussion of the Conflict of Interest (COI) law. New members of Advisory are required to take an online COI training. The Open Meeting Law (OML) statute is also important and applies to all public bodies in Massachusetts. OML applies to all meetings of Advisory with a quorum, and these meetings must be publicized.

Other sources of relevant information:

- + Normally Zoning and General bylaws are sent to all Advisory members along with the Town Report.
- + The Advisory handbook is being updated.
- + The League of Women Voters publishes a local government guideline.
- + Proposition 2 ½ is also important to understand.
- + The Unified Plan should be reviewed.
- + The Massachusetts Association of Finance Committees (MAFC) and the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) offer one-hour webinars that deal with various aspects of town government

The context in which Advisory Committee operates was described. Wellesley has a decentralized form of government. The elected boards respond to their constituencies. Advisory is the one appointed board that

does not answer to the electorate or a specific constituency. Advisory performs due diligence for Town Meeting and “kicks the tires” for the proposals coming before Town Meeting. Four responsibilities of Advisory:

1. Every week from now to the beginning of each Town Meeting, Advisory will review and analyze everything on the Warrants for the Special and Annual Town meetings. When reviewing the Warrant proposals, it is okay to ask questions that any TMM might want to know. This questioning will help the Boards prepare stronger proposals for their presentations at Town Meeting. There was a discussion on how Advisory votes for both supportive and unsupportive outcomes.
2. Advisory Committee members are liaisons to other boards and committees, and are responsible for conveying to their respective boards the views of Advisory Committee and vice versa.
3. Preparing the Advisory Report for the ATM and the STM. Everyone will participate and Neal will coordinate the effort. It is a huge undertaking that is done in a short amount of time. It is a critical document for TMMs.
4. Advisory also acts on requests to transfer funds from reserve accounts.

Other Advisory elements were discussed:

- Workflow and the calendar
- Dos and don'ts of being a member of Advisory
- Advisory is expected to have a Town-wide perspective and evaluate what is in Town's best interest
- Advisory makes recommendations not decisions
- Advisory has influence but no power
- The strength and vigor of Advisory's analysis is important
- Advisory must have the ability to communicate the results of that analysis
- Advisory must foster a belief among TMMs that their deliberations are impartial and open minded
- Members of Advisory are a committee, but it is not necessary to agree; instead, a consensus is formed while all opinions -- supportive and dissenting -- are reflected in the Advisory Report
- Advisory members should not be working on local election campaigns or endorsing local candidates
- Advisory respects all those who come forward in front of Advisory
- Advisory must have the courage to ask and follow through on the hard questions
- Advisory speaks with one voice through the Chair

7:55 p.m. Finance Overview, Sheryl Strother, Finance Director

A finance orientation and presentation were provided for Advisory members. Advisory questions:

- A question was asked about the range of reserves.
> It is typically 8 – 12% and this year it will probably be around the 15% range. Specific numbers will be presented to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) next week.
- Clarification was requested about last year's conversations about removing cash capital as a concept and moving those items into the expense budget.
> Cash capital and money spent is looked at every year. There has always been cash capital – items must be above \$10,000. However, little things were moving into cash capital because people felt squeezed by operating budget guidelines and some items that ended up in cash capital are actually routine operating costs. There has been success in moving smaller items into operating budgets, but larger reoccurring expenses still need discussion. This will be an on-going effort and discussion item for the Town.

- Where is the CARES Act money coming from, how is it spoken for, how much is there, and can it really go to all these different things? There was request for a summary of programs approved and the dollars received.
- > The town received \$2.6 million in CARES money and the Schools received \$1.097 plus some smaller grants for technology and summer funding for some special education.
 - > The schools' money is mostly spoken for as they are using the funds to open and provide the educational program in September. The Town has also funded some of the schools' needs.
 - > The Town was first told to apply for FEMA funds for initial emergency response costs, such as the BOH, Fire and Police. We are no longer in an emergency phase will but there are still demands and needs. The BOH was told there is money available for nursing staff.
 - > The CARES money runs through December, although the BOH says they need permanent staff beyond December. CARES money is more of a short-term solution. The town has a little less than \$2 million in CARES money remaining.
 - > The CARES money is under control of the BOS and it is their responsibility to dispense the money. In doing this, they will take a Town-wide look, and there are limitations on how the money can be used; for example, it cannot be used for revenue replacement. There will be a lot of conversation about the CARES money.
- Will reserve funds be used this fiscal year to deal with shortfalls that haven't been seen?
- > Yes, reserves can be voted on by Town Meeting at any point in time. The Selectmen try to maintain a consistent and fair approach. The Selectmen do not decide.
- The BOS has CARES money and the schools have CARES money and are they each responsible for spending their money?
- > Yes.
- If anyone uses CARES money to hire staff, are they paying benefits and is this headcount position put into their base for the next budget? Will departments be required to tell Advisory if a person is hired through CARES or part of the original budget
- > The CARES money is not a long-term source of funding and so it cannot be assumed that funding is baked into the budget for a permanent. This is a conversation you will have with BOH.
- Is CARES money and FEMA money being accounted for in a report?
- > Yes, it's being worked on. Of the 2020 money, \$250,000 that was spent, we can give back to free cash.
- What's happening with revenue receipts?
- > Real estate tax was deferred real estate to June 1, but the interest wasn't delayed. So, tax receipts are good.
 - > Motor vehicle is variable and might be down. The bulk of the billing was in January and February.
 - > It's too early to tell on permits. There was some slowing in activity all around.
 - > In summary, the bulk of receipts are taxes and they are fine. The Commonwealth is providing the same amount of support in 2021 as in 2020. 2022 could be more of a problem.

8:40 p.m. Administrative Matters/Liaison Reports/Minutes

Expectations for this year were discussed. At last year's ATM, the Zoom platform highlighted the problems with a more casual conversation that Advisory likes to have. Julie would like to manage this by making the meetings a bit more formal with clarity on who is speaking at any given time. Therefore, committee members and non-committee members in the room should ask Julie to recognize them before speaking. Obviously, though, if Julie does not notice a request, it is fine to jump in to get her attention.

Advisory members should look at the various resources as needed. Everything is online. If their board/committee is presenting, liaisons should make sure that presentation and relevant backup materials get to Alissa by COB Monday so that everyone can be prepared for the discussion.

A revision of the Advisory handbook will be sent out this week.

There was a discussion of recusal. It's important not to talk about issues outside the committee meetings. All opinions need to get into the book as it's important to include all sides of an issue in the Advisory Report so that Town Meeting members understand Advisory's thinking.

The OML was discussed. All meetings are public. Advisory meetings are open.

+ Fall will be very busy as there is a Special Town Meeting (STM) planned October 26, 27, 28. If additional days are needed, there will be no STM the week of the election so the meeting would resume the week of November 9.

+ STM will take up all articles not voted on at last year's ATM plus an additional two or three articles. The warrant date and public hearing dates were discussed. The tight timeline was discussed. Advisory will either need to re-vote the Articles or vote to adopt the votes from last year. Saturday, September 26 is being held for a potential Advisory meeting to vote.

+ Citizen petitions are unknown. There are two citizen's petitions that are still on the ATM warrant from last year but there could be new citizen's petitions once the STM warrant opens.

9:10 p.m. Minutes Approval

John Lanza made and Deed McCollum seconded a motion to approve the June 22, 2020 minutes.

Roll call vote:

Bill Maynard – yes

Patti Quigley – yes

John Lanza – yes

Deed McCollum - yes

Jennifer Fallon – yes

Jeff Levitan – abstain

Corinne Monahan - abstain

Shawn Baker – abstain

Doug Smith – abstain

Jake Erhard – abstain

Tom Cunningham – abstain

Lauren Duprey – abstain

Neal Goins - yes

Patti Quigley made and John Lanza seconded a motion to approve the June 23, 2020 minutes.

Roll call vote:

Bill Maynard - yes

Patty Quigley - yes

John Lanza - yes

Deed McCollum - yes

Jennifer Fallon – yes

Jeff Levitan - abstain

Corinne Monahan - abstain

Shawn Baker – abstain

Doug Smith – abstain

Jake Erhard – abstain
Tom Cunningham – abstain
Lauren Duprey – abstain
Neal Goings – yes

Jennifer Fallon made and Patti Quigley seconded a motion to approve the July 8, 2020 minutes with the corrections to reflect John Lanza in attendance and Deed McCollum as a yes on the roll call vote to approve the \$12,000 transfer.

Roll call vote:

Bill Maynard - yes
Patty Quigley - yes
John Lanza - yes
Deed McCollum - yes
Jennifer Fallon – yes
Jeff Levitan - abstain
Corinne Monahan - abstain
Shawn Baker – abstain
Doug Smith – abstain
Jake Erhard– abstain
Tom Cunningham – abstain
Lauren Duprey – abstain
Neal Goings – yes

9:20 p.m. Liaison Reports

Jenn Fallon, Schools – an update on schools and the return-to-learning strategy was discussed. Learning will be remote for the first two weeks. First date of in-school would be October 1. It hoped to have testing for all students and teachers. Schools continue to keep the community updated.

Patti Quigley, SBC – the SBC was on hiatus this summer and just started meeting again. There are community meetings September 17 and September 24. SBC will vote on a recommendation so that the School Committee and BOS can then take up a recommendation vote. There is nothing to vote on at STM, but there may be a presentation to update people. STM is the day before the date for submission to MSBA.

John Lanza, Planning – 10 zoning articles for STM are holdovers from ATM. Planning has been working with half-staff for a couple of years and getting by.

John Lanza, BOH – will be coming to Advisory to find permanent money for the employees that were hired with CARES money. BOH has been working with the schools quite a lot. BOH meeting with school committee to come up with best reopening plan. There is a plan to develop a priority program with Newton Wellesley hospital for students and teachers with symptoms. BOH is trying to develop a plan for flu clinics. There has been an uptick in mental health issues.

Corinne Monahan, Library – Library coming to Advisory September 30 and October 21.

9:42 p.m. Adjourn

Deed McCollum made and Doug Smith seconded a motion to adjourn.

Roll call vote

Bill Maynard - yes

Patti Quigley – yes
John Lanza - yes
Deed McCollum - yes
Jennifer Fallon – yes
Jeff Levitan - yes
Corinne Monahan - yes
Shawn Baker – yes
Doug Smith – yes
Jake Erhard – yes
Tom Cunningham – yes
Lauren Duprey – yes
Neal Goins – yes