

TOWN OF IPSWICH
Finance Committee
Meeting of March 26th, 2019
Town Hall, 25 Green Street

With a quorum present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 7:37.

Finance Committee members present: Chair Janice Clements Skelton, Tammy Jones, Kevin Murphy, Michael Dougherty, Jamie Fay, Walter Hartford, Michael Schaaf

Not present: Rob White, Chris Doucette

Michael Schaaf arrived at 8:12

1. Citizens Queries – Janice Clements Skelton

- No citizens queries.

2. Acceptance of Finance Committee Minutes

- Approval of minutes for 3/7, 3/12, 3/13, and 3/18.
- Sarah noted changes that need to be made from the 3/18 notes.
- Motion to approve 3/7, 3/12, 3/13, and updated 3/18 minutes made by Jamie seconded by Michael D.
→*Vote: Motion passed unanimously, 6-0*

3. Government Study Town Meeting Article

Craig Saline and Diane Young, two of the five members of government study committee, discussed the articles on the warrant. So far, the government Study Committee has presented to many of the boards. Three topics will be presented at the Town Meeting. The first is Article 17, which is about making the bi-laws gender neutral. Article 15 is adding 3 sentences to the Select Board based upon feedback regarding the word “balance”. The proposed language is different and more up to date than the language in the warrant. Article 1 is to discuss is the result of a citizen’s petition to make the Planning Board members elected rather than appointed. The motion was defeated, but within that process the Government Study Committee felt it was important to research this. The GSC voted that the process would stay the same, but also wanted to provide the rationale for this.

Diana Young presented information regarding the differences between electing and appointing Planning Boards. The Planning Board has been appointed since 1963, and appointing the Board is in line with many other surrounding towns. Diane also went over the duties of The Planning Board and presented information that was found regarding what is good for a planning board and what is bad. An appointed board serves these needs best and serves the town better. The recommendation of the Government Study Committee is to keep the Planning Board appointed. Craig also explained in further detail that from researching Planning Boards around the country, appointed Planning Boards give more ownership.

Jamie asked how Diane found this information. Diane said most of her research came from speaking to Town Clerks and Town Planners in surrounding towns. Jamie said that these opinions are likely typical of Town Planners, but may not be the opinions of other citizens. He asked if Diane should also interview other Planning Board members from other towns. Craig also said that some Planning Boards get more into policy, our Planning Board is not a policy Planning Board, is instead ruled by the bi-law. Jamie asked if the Planning Board used to be elected, prior to 1963. Craig said yes, and it was changed with the new charter. Janice said the two things that surprised her in the research is the attendance and the pool of candidates. She asked how elected officials were considered less reliable than appointed boards. Diane said that the feedback that she got was that people who are appointed are more likely to have a broad-based interest whereas elected officials might only be in attendance if the meeting was on a topic they were interested in or had run on. Janice also asked about why the GSC thought there would be a small pool of candidates considering how many people are running for town positions currently. Diane said that may be the case this year but it is not always the case. She also said that interviewing with the Town Manager and trying to get appointed is a more grueling process than running. Janice said there isn’t data behind this information, this is an opinion survey, and that we need to be careful when presenting this to the town and preface that this is soft data, not hard data.

Michael asked about the boards that were studied and what percentage were elected vs. appointed. Of the 22 boards studied, 6 were appointed and the rest were elected. He also asked if they spoke to the people on the Planning Boards that were elected. Kevin said that one of the things we hear from the town is that the Planning Board is very active in writing

bi-laws. People see that the Planning Board has a lot of power. He asked if they saw any towns in which different boards made the appointments. For example, instead of the Town Manager making all of the appointments, the Select Board would make one appointment, as would the Finance Board. Diane said a good number of the appointed boards were appointed by the Select Board. Craig said in Ipswich the Zoning Board of Appeals is appointed by the Select Board. Michael D. asked if any of the 6 appointed boards were appointed at Town Meeting. Jamie asked how this will be included in Town Meeting. Craig said it will be reported out somewhere in the warrant. Craig said they just wanted to close the loop because some people who voted no may have done so with the understanding that research would still be done in regards to this. They are not asking the town to vote.

Craig also explained that the gender-neutral article is the same process they went through with the Town Charter. The updated bi-laws will be in the Town Managers office. All of the changes are gender related. Michael D. clarified, Board of Selectmen will now be called Select Board, and Selectmen will be instead called Select Board Member.

Article 15. The GSC took feedback received from Town Meeting regarding the word “balance” and removed the section that said “The Select Board will present” because it is not clear who presents in the charter or the bi-laws. It is left to the boards. The GSC met with the Planning Board, School Committee, and Select Board. The School Committee asked if Craig would bring a few areas to the attention of FinCom to see if they should be changed. Craig said the feedback that has been given has been beneficial in terms of making sure things are written in a productive way. He also said the reason they are presenting this is to approve the Select Board Charter Article, and to look into how we plan to get a baseline of how we do things today so that we can create a long-term plan. The Select Board will form a small working group to identify how planning is done and to recommend the best way to begin designing a long-term planning process. The Town Manager, school Superintendent, and Finance Committee Chair are recommended for this. This committee will regularly update governing town bodies and report at the fall 2019 Special Town Meeting. Gary also noted that the Planning Board asked if they should be a part of the startup of this, Gary said he thinks that makes sense. Craig presented slides showing why this is needed. Craig said we need this plan because we have a lot coming down the pipeline, and if we keep tackling things in a sequential manner, we will not be able to meet all of the needs.

Michael D. asked Sarah about the word “balanced” being removed, as he knows the state likes that term. Sarah said that Michael is correct, the state likes the budget to be balanced and a balanced budget will still be presented. You have to have sufficient revenues in order to vote spending. Michael said maybe we should keep the word balance in there so the state knows we are presenting a balanced budget. Walter said they can use the reserve fund. Jamie said we have never not had a balanced budget, and adding it in might make it seem like it has not been balanced. It is understood that the budget will be balanced because it is required. Gary said another thing to consider is that the charter was established in 1967, one of the things this does is bring the charter into the era of Prop 2.5. Jamie asked how this was initiated. Craig said the Select Board asked the GSC to look at the charter to see where it needed updating. Addressing the Select Board Charter Article begins to meet the needs of long term planning. Gary said in the school project, the Planning Board was not asked to participate. This is because we have not had a comprehensive planning and long-term process in the town. The unity that FinCom and the Select Board have, as well as the School Board and Town Manager, does not always exist within towns. If this is established in policy’s and best practices, it helps to take the practices during the good times and bring them to the bad times. This also complies with a lot of regulations. One of the holes in the charter is a process like this. There are things we have been doing that have worked well, but these processes have not been put into a formal document. Janice said this is the first time we will be introducing practice into the charter. Up until this point the charter has been about the seat of responsibly, and this takes us down the road of how things should be done.

Janice asked Jamie if he thinks this process does not belong in the charter. Jamie said first, he isn’t sure there is a consensus on what the actual problem is, because it was been working well so far without having this formal process. The community is already well-managed, is this necessary and is this actually going to have an effect on how we do things in the community? Jamie said he thinks we do a good job in town and is not sure that it is a problem. He said Town Council said this should be in the bi-law, not the charter. Craig said the towns that have been successful with this have it in the charter, not the bi-law. He also said that although we have been successful over the last 20 years, the issues coming up in the next few years are bigger than issues we have ever had to deal with in the past. Jamie asked if they could draft an article in town meeting to do a 20-year strategic plan for the community and appropriate money to do so. Craig said that this is the beginning of that. Appointing the town leaders to get a committee started is the beginning of this. Jamie asked why not do that right away, Craig said it is not the role of the GSC to do that. Gary asked if this was presented tonight as an amendment to the bi-laws, would it be approved tonight. He also said that the Finance Committee has already acknowledged these problems exist, and this is how the GSC is presenting to make changes. Janice said there is a committee that meets to discuss planning for building the budget. The committee has members from the School Committee, the Select Board, and FinCom. Gary said he appreciates that this is happening, but it is happening because

everyone gets along. There are towns where this is not the case and meetings like this don't happen. This is just a formalized direction and would only benefit the town. Jamie asked how many communities were found that have long range planning or strategy committees. Craig said there were quite a few, 5 or 6 were looked at closely. Craig said he believes Jamie is asking why we don't just ask for funding. They have to have an entity within the town that pulls together all of the various stakeholders in the town. When looking at who should do this, the Select Board makes the most sense. It needs to become a bi-law, we can do that later. Dave Stanley, Government Study Committee, asked what the harm would be in moving this forward. He sees no harm, and sees only forward progress. Jamie said they had a similar conversation regarding The Green Communities Act. It was something that they were asked to vote for, and FinCom wanted to know what alternatives were considered. Jamie said he just wants to know what alternatives were considered. Craig said they looked at what is right for Ipswich in terms of long term planning. Michael D. said he noticed that there seemed to be a lack of accountability with the school project. He asked why it should not be changed in the bi-law. Gary said it's a difference in how it is approved. The difference is that the state is involved in approving the charter. Craig said the citizen that mentioned this said he felt that the bi-laws were a more appreciate place for this, but Craig said the bi-laws are subservient to the charter. Craig wanted one place that explains what the role of the Select Board is and what they are responsible for. This way the board members will know their role and can be held accountable. Tammy thanked them for their work. She said she agrees with Jamie's point that the town runs well, but she agrees that it makes sense to write down what we do because at some point the town may not be running as smoothly and we can look back at what went well previously.

Michael S. asked if this is a Capital Budget long range planning committee, or is it intended to address other needs as well. Craig said it is about capital but also about the plans for all of the boards and departments. Janice said there is a planning function that takes into account initiatives and how we will fund them. It is about planning, not just budgeting. Michael said he agrees with Jamie that the town is well run, but we're not perfect and some additional planning could be beneficial. He also asked if the Select Board are still able to operate without any staff while taking this on. Craig said that Nishan asked what the outcome of the school vote would have been if we had done this prior to the vote. Craig said they didn't want to just tell the Select Board what to do, they are just getting this started and putting people in charge. We have a lot of major projects coming up that could all hit at the same time and the town could be in real trouble.

4. Review of Budget Hearings

Janice said if there are areas of concern in the budget, this is the time to get it out there before Bean Counting and asked if FinCom has specific recommendations for Bean Counting. Jamie said he has noticed two themes across budgets. The first is GIS and how it is not being used effectively within towns and interdepartmentally. It is a failure point in our budgeting process that we have not figured out a solution to. The other thing that a lot of boards and committees mentioned was scanning documents to get them online. He wondered if we should hire someone to come in to scan documents. Jamie also talked about the library archives position and noted that from a policy perspective it appears that the position was created mid-year without a discussion, and he would like to have a discussion about if this position should continue or not. He also mentioned having a discussion with the town clerk about the three positions vs two. Janice said she had similar ideas for discussions and also added to the library that as a town do we want to use grant funds for labor, and if so should we be doing this from a different approach. Janice said overall, the town is looking for ways to create efficiencies. The GIS project and scanning project are about spending one-time money for long term savings and efficiency. Janice also noted that a lot of directorates have asked for more hours. We are working harder and not smarter, and wondered if we could create practices that minimize this. Janice also said that the discussion about the grant isn't just about the library grant, it's about the process around creating these grant-funded positions and the position is then needed and is added to the budget. Kevin said that he noticed that information is not being shared soon enough within departments, and that employees for different departments cannot help each other. Michael D said that as we move to getting leases out of our capital plan, we should also move to getting staff funded by the budget and not through grants. Tammy said she is used to grant-funded positions because she works in research. She said grants can be a nice way to get a position started because we can try a position out to see if there is a need. She doesn't think we should shut that door because it gets positions paid by the state. Jamie said that if we leave the door open, we need to have more of a process. We can't have both the funding of labor through grants as well as no process. We need clear measurements about when this process is kicked off. Historically what we have done is gotten to the end of a grant and just decided where or not it worked without actually having a process of data to keep the positions. Walter said the leadership will be very instrumental in making use of interdepartmental help. Janice said she has tossed around the idea of a horizontal budget which would look at the budget in a way that helps all departments. She also said she thinks what the Government Study Committee is working on is for a similar goal. If we invest now to improve the quality of work life for the staff it will pay

off in the long run. Kevin said he thinks the Town Manager initiative budget is a good idea. Tammy said she thought this year's budget presentations demonstrated a lot more connected and efficient than in the past. We are starting along that path of working together.

Michael S. said that the discussion with the school committee revealed a need for review of the Feoffees and the use of the funds. FinCom's role in the review would be to see what comes out of the school's report, and to advise the School Committee if necessary. The problem is that all of the money is not being spent, and that the language regarding the spending of the money is too narrowly defined. It needs to be reviewed with the understanding of why it is not being spent, and is it because the criteria is too narrow. If that is the case, should this be revised. Janice also said to remember that the amount of money that was turned back appeared larger but it was over the course of 6 years and was about \$20,000 a year. Janice said FinCom is also due for the annual report out from the Feoffees. Michael S. said the funding of the athletic building seems misaligned with the purpose of the Feoffees funds and makes it seem that the process is not as rigorous as once thought. Michael S. said he spoke with the affordable housing trust fund and he is in support of that. He would like to see the partnership to focus affordable units so the people who work in the town can afford to live here. Janice said that many aspects of the presentation put her mind at ease, but she thought we do not have as rigorous of a process to protect the town from liability in regards to vetting people. Although it seems like a good process, it may not be protecting the town.

Michael S. also brought up the proposed new well. The projected need did not use the actual per capita demand, but rather increased that by 30%. Jamie said they used the state numbers. Michael said it may be because we are going to have more bodies in town, but he does not see a reason to increase it by 33%. Secondly, we have an unaccounted-for rate for water of 16%. The state recommends no more than 10%. This suggests we have leaky pipes and this should be addressed. Thirdly, we have an inadequate water conservation program. Michael looked into other towns and they have active programs. Our website has tips for water conservation but does not have active rebate programs for technology to find leaks or to replace shower heads and low-flush toilets. In light of the fact that we have elevated needs for demand, that we have leaky pipes, and that we have no water conservation plan, it doesn't make sense to spend the money on the new well. Especially during this delicate time for Ipswich. These other aspects should be dealt with first. Walter asked if this well is to help purely with demand or is it about reducing the manganese. Michael D. said it is both. There is a lower projected value of manganese, but it will also help with demand during a draught. Last summer there was only 12 days of water supply left in the reservoir. Michael S. asked about the other well, Michael D. said that well is in a different watershed. Janice said she agrees that we need to do more for conservation, but also thinks we need to be prepared and have a better infrastructure within town. This will help during draught situations or if one of the other wells fails. Drinking water is at the core of what a municipality provides. Kevin said to a degree you can already say that one of our wells is failing. Walter asked if this would reduce our supply taken from the Ipswich River. Michael D. said the Ipswich River is already overtaxed and can get specific numbers. Jamie said we take water out of the Ipswich River but we also put water back in, although he doesn't believe anyone has done the math to figure out how much.

5. Planning for Bean Counting

Janice noted that this is a good list but the question becomes which of these items are actionable. If the Finance Committee feels very strongly about something they can make a case and do their best to influence decision makers. Common themes: upgrade to GIS, comprehensive scanning/digitization project, processes around new positions in the budget, looking at how to continue Tony's work on increasing cooperation, facilities needs assessment and how to tackle this, Feoffees, Ipswich Housing Partnership clarity and the towns responsibility liability to that, and the Lynch Well.

Tony said with regard to the first few, there will be a new Planning Director position filled. One of the priorities will be to work on GIS. Jamie said they heard about this from all departments, not just the Planning Office. Tony said it will start in the Planning Office and they will take the lead on this. They will be an in-house resource for the other departments. Tony said this will require re-allocation of existing resources. Jamie said they could get money for this now during this budget. Tony said we could but he would caution throwing money at something that may not be needed. Jamie said we would be further ahead if we had money ready to go to fund this instead of having to wait to ask for more money. Janice said FinCom has tried to have the GIS problem addressed for 6 years and it hasn't happened. Tony said that he sees weaknesses in each department that can be addressed and GIS will be a part of that. He doesn't want to ask for money that is not needed. He doesn't want to turn down additional funds but he thinks this can be accomplished without additional funds. He also has a plan to get documents scanned and digitized. Hoping to create a policy and a process for this. He also said it's not just about scanning, it's about going through documents and weeding out what we don't need, so it can't just be a hired consultant, it has to be someone that knows what to get rid of and what to keep. The Planning Director and HR will be working on GIS and digitization.

Regarding processes for added positions, Tony said he doesn't typically like to add new positions, but he does back the library position. He had 4 meetings with Patty before creating the position and the source of funding was clear. He also backed this position because of the importance of the history of Ipswich. Janice said it is not about this position necessarily, it is about the adding of additional positions every year. Tony said he doesn't think there has been that many positions added over the last 10 years. Janice said it would be better if there was a clearly articulated process of how this happens as opposed to creating positions funded by grants and having to figure out how to fund them later on. Jamie asked what the long-term game plan for the library position is. Making sure documents and files are posted, accessible and stored properly. Tony also said this position could be used by the Town Clerk for the documents stored in the vault. Janice said this speaks to the larger conversation of positions that are reaching out and doing extra duties outside of their position. The directors are all asking for more time, and perhaps in some case this expansion of roles and responsibilities is resulting in a corresponding shortage in labor. We need to stop doing some things. What is essential to the roles and what is needed from the town. Tammy said she believes the archivist position is part of the town's mission because it is part of who we are. These documents will disintegrate and there is no going back. Michael S. referred to "mission creep" and agreed that it is a concern. Michael S. said we need a strategic plan to lay out what the goals are for positions so that it is laid out and clear and there is no creep. That way it is intentional, and isn't something that just happens. Jamie asked how we go about making sure this happens. Janice said this brings us back to process. We need to have laid out processes that are not situational or unique to each position. That way if there is a problem we can look to the process. Tony said that the goals of the Select Board tie in with this and that this was thought about when discussing the position with Patty. Janice asked what we will do with the information from School Dude. Tony said it will come in in late May or early June and they will sit down to take a look at the needs and how this can be addressed. Once this happens Tony will come back to the boards. Janice asked if there should be money earmarked for this in the budget. Tony said he thinks we have enough money in the budget for the immediate needs and can then move forward in October.

Jamie asked about the school budget and if there are any concerns. Janice said she would like to understand the turf field and how the money will be raised. She also doesn't understand how the field house is being funded and how the daily and long-term maintenance is going to be funded. Michael S. agreed that we should ask for a report on that. Michael S. also wanted to note to the School Committee that the Finance Committee is looking forward to the Feoffees report.

6. New/ Other Business

Tammy noted that she was appointed by FinCom from the Town Moderator. She is running for the Select Board and is going to tender her resignation the day after Town Meeting. Tammy also gave an update on the Public Safety Committee. It has been very active. They chose the HKT Architects from Charlestown. They came out last week and met with everyone. A presentation was scheduled for mid-April, and another one in May and June. The process is starting and so far, they have been very happy with HKT. Janice asked if they have done any local projects. Tammy said they have and they have incredible respect for the communities in which they work. They are interested in gathering information about Ipswich and understanding the departments and the community to guide their work. Tammy said she will get a list of projects they have worked on. Part of the work they are doing is on site location. Bialek Park is being considered because we need 5 acres. Janice said it would be a shame to repeat history. The chances of the community voting to take Bialek Park are low. Tammy said it is a much smaller portion of the park that would be needed and it would also be about reinvesting in the park. The committee is also doing the research to determine if it is better to have one joint Public Safety Building, or two separate buildings. Jamie asked if there will be a public presentation. Tammy said there will be multiple presentations as well as multiple public forums.

7. Adjournment – Janice Clements Skelton

- Motion to adjourn made Michael S. seconded by Walter
→Vote: Motion passed unanimously, 6-0

Respectfully Submitted By
Alyson von der Esch
4.8.19