

DRAFT minutes
Town of Brattleboro Finance Committee

May 20, 2015
4:30 p.m.

Minutes by Paula Melton, Recording Clerk

Attending

Jan Anderson
Paula Melton, Recording Clerk
Franz Reichsman
Jacqueline Stromberg
Kathryn Turnas II (joined by speaker phone)
John Wilmerding, Interim Presiding Chair

The meeting opened at 4:39 p.m.

Deliberations

- We reviewed and discussed our committee's charge as described in the Town Charter.
- We discussed meeting protocols and decided on informal meetings, with openness to Robert's Rules of Order if necessity requires.
- With guidance from Jan Anderson, Executive Secretary in the Town Manager's office, we review Open Meeting laws, including precautions regarding electronic communication.
- We each discussed our availability to be officers of the committee, and we chose officers (see "Decisions").
- Jan Anderson noted that the Town Manager has launched a full review of the Town's budgeting and spending practices. We discussed how our work might integrate with that.
- We talked about priorities for the committee this year, highlighting our role as advisors to Representative Town Meeting. Possibilities included:
 - Long-range financial planning: how we can learn about and incorporate best practices from other municipalities
 - Staying in touch with school budgets, including the WSESU budget, which is not in the direct purview of Representative Town Meeting but is included in the committee's charge
 - Possible strategies for reducing insurance premiums/labor costs
 - "Management by crisis" spending by the Town for expenses that should have been anticipated; how to suggest improvements
 - Options for integrating finance goals with energy goals and renewable energy development
- We discussed resources available to us, including the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, and considered possible experts who might be able to debrief us on areas of interest, including school budgets.

- We discussed reports we would like to receive from town and school officials.

Decisions

- The committee reached consensus that it will use consensus decision-making except when disagreement requires a vote.
- The group accepted John Wilmerding as Interim Presiding Chair.
- The group accepted Paula Melton as Recording Clerk.
- The committee agreed to explore Google Drive as a repository for documents to be referenced between meetings.
- The committee set its next meeting for 4:30 p.m. June 17.
- The committee decided to discuss and possibly take action on the following at the June 17 meeting:
 - John's research on the nature of capital expenditures
 - Franz's research into Vermont League as a resource
 - Use of Google Drive as a repository
 - Overview from Peter Elwell and/or John O'Connor on how the budgeting process is working and how it will work in the future
 - Top priorities for the year
 - Assigning individuals to track all three budget processes for which the committee is responsible

Action items

- John will research the definition of "capital expense" and report on how other municipalities deal with long-range capital planning.
- Franz will explore the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and report on how we might use it as a resource.