

Brattleboro Representative Town Meeting Finance Committee Thursday, August 17, 2017

Members attending: Alex Fischer, Franz Reichsman, Abbe Sweeney, Scott Smyth
Members not attending: Avery Schwenk, Ralph Meima

The meeting was called to order at 5:38 p.m., and the agenda was reviewed .

Discussion of upcoming budget processes

Three budgets will be reviewed during the coming months, the municipal budget, the town school board budget and the BUHS budget. At the administration level, town and school budgets are likely to be well under way.

For the town, the Comprehensive Review of Town Operations was updated in the spring, and the town manager expects the revised Long Term Financial Plan to be available in early to mid-September. He will provide a copy to us when it is available, and will join us at our meeting on September 21. The full budget review process will most likely begin in October.

The town school budget process will begin at the administrative level. We will have access to the process when a suggested budget emerges and the school board begins looking at it. The next town school board meeting is at 3:00 on August 23 at EES on Birge Street.

The BUHS budget will undergo a similar process, but there is an additional layer with the BUHS finance committee. Depending on meeting times, we would be able attend those meetings in addition to the meetings of the full BUHS board. The next BUHS board meeting is at 7:00 p.m. on Monday August 21 in the Cusick Conference Room at WRCC. The BUHS finance committee will meet for a walk-through of proposed capital projects at 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday, August 22 at the main entrance to BUHS.

Attending the budget meetings of the various boards, or at least watching them on BCTV, is an important part of becoming familiar with and forming our independent position on the budgets. Reviewing the numbers and talking to informed people is also part of the process.

Act 46

A number of interested parties have expressed opinions on the financial implications of Act 46. If we are to issue a report on this question, it should be completed in October, before the referendum is held in November. We have already heard from David Schoales, who felt there would be no financial advantage in a merger. We might also want to hear from Frank Rucker, members of the Act 46 study committee, and others about this topic.

Municipal energy policy

A question we might consider as part of the municipal budget is whether it would make sense to accelerate the implementation of energy-saving measures by issuing bonds to finance them. In addition to the environmental benefits, there could be financial benefits. At the least, it would make sense to proceed if the outcome were revenue neutral or better. Determining the financial

prospects would mean reviewing the 2016 municipal energy audit and deciding how fluctuating energy prices would affect the decision. Alex will continue her work on the new energy nonprofit and report any interesting developments.

Work plan, timelines, and meeting dates

Committee members will have to decide how their individual schedules coincide with the various deadlines for the projects outlined above. Key dates are:

Act 46 - Referendum in early November, report finished before then.

BUHS budget - The budget is put before the voters at the end of January or early February. Our report should be available roughly two weeks before the meeting date.

Municipal and town school budgets - Reports should be finished in mid-February for release before the town meeting informational sessions.

Abbe will be able to do some of the research on Act 46. Scott said he is interested in Act 46 and in the BUHS budget.

Minutes of the May 24, 2017 meeting were approved without any changes.

Our next meeting will be September 21, 2017 at 5:30 p.m. The October meeting will be either October 19 or 26, according to committee members preferences.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Franz Reichsman

Addendum - Suggestions for further action:

1. Review the current LTFP at the town website and then the revised edition when available in preparation for the next meeting.
2. Read the report of the Act 46 Study Committee, available here: <http://www.wssu.k12.vt.us/boards/wsesuact46articles20170718.pdf>. It's about ten pages.
3. Look at the 2016 Energy Audit, also available at the town website, at the Energy Committee page. The full report is very long. The executive summary is more manageable.
4. Think about your areas of interest, our timeline, and your own schedule to help decide which aspects of our work you're available for over the next six months or so. Here is some relevant information with regard to other boards.:

The BUHS board met eight times during September through January last year.

The BUHS finance committee met ten times.

The town school board met eleven times. (There is no separate finance committee.)

The select board met sixteen times.

Most or all of these meetings should be available on BCTV.