



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts
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09/19/2013 Minutes

VISION 2020 FISCAL RESOURCES TASK GROUP

Meeting Minutes 9/19/13

ATTENDEES: Gordon Jamieson (Co-Chair), David Garbarino (Co-Chair), Brian Hasbrouck, Pete Howard (Secretary)

TOWN DAY: Gordon edited the handout we used last year. Pete will make copies & supply to booth. Brian (1000-1130), David (1130-1330), and Pete (1330-1500) will staff the booth for FRTG.

MY TAX DOLLARS: Gordon reported that had a chance to review and comment on the Town's Visual Budget. He described it as an excellent enhancement of My Tax Dollars. We will be able to see it during Town Day. Gordon has arranged a tour of this tool at our next meeting.

FINANCIAL PLAN REVIEW: Pete reviewed the suggestions he has (Ref 1) based on his reading. He urged all to critique his ideas and add their own. Gordon suggested a sensitivity analysis based on the long range plan that would explore a few of the key assumptions. Last year Gordon made a sample of what might be done. See Ref 2 in the minutes of 5/16/13. Gordon also suggested a simpler way to set the capital budget: increase by a fixed % like the other budgets at a rate based on the rate computed by the present torturous process. This idea created some discussion.

NEXT MEETING: Oct 17 - Meetings held monthly, 3rd Thursdays, Senior Center 2nd Flr Mtg Room.

Ref 1 Comments on 2014 Financial Plan.

August 2012

PBH

Comments on 2014 Financial Plan

P3-24 Budget Message

This is an excellent review of Town finances, the proposed budget, and policies related to the budget. We think it provides an excellent introduction to these matters for residents. The discussion of the Town's structural deficit would be more clear if the term were defined. A brief discussion of the possible future financial challenges that may face the Town might be worthwhile. (Renovation of AHS, Renovation of Minuteman Tech, OPEB funding for example.)

Section II Revenue

This is an excellent review of all the revenue that is appropriated by Town Meeting. It does not include revenue into revolving funds, designated funds and trust funds. These funds cover significant services and should at least be discussed.

Section IV Budgets

Include the School Budget, or explain why it is not covered & refer to the School Department's Plan

Consider a page for the Finance Committee. Thought the budget is small, the service is essential to the operation of Town Meeting.

P23 Long Range Projection

Call attention to use of Override Stabilization Fund to handle the structural deficit by

Deleting line F, Override Stabilization Fund, from Revenue

Deleting line J, Override Stabilization Fund, from Appropriations

Replace with new line J, Revenues - Expenses

Replace line K with Deposit in/Withdraw from Override Stabilization Fund

Add line L BALANCE

Add Line M Balance On Override Stabilization Fund

See abbreviated spreadsheet

P59 Town Organization Chart

This important chart should show all the elected positions on the same line; though accurate, the color code approach is confusing to new readers.

How about a foldout or a 2 page spread?

Under BoS Boards & Commissions

Correct Arlington Cultural Center to Arlington Cultural Commission

Add Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee

Under Town Moderator

Add Arlington Recycling Committee

P65 Board of Selectmen

The members & chairs are correct for most of FY13; incorrect for FY14. Suggest this chart be updated as necessary after the local election in April.

Suggest a note explaining when the personnel changes are made.

P69 & 70 Town Manager/Purchasing/Communications

All material on this page concerns the Communication function only. This is very misleading. Suggest a similar level of detail for the other functions. Surveys have shown that most residents under value the admin function. It should not be minimized in this document.

P97 Planning

Include in Objectives the management objectives for the 6 Town buildings managed: Maximum revenue?, At cost home for public service organizations? Facilities used by Town programs as cost?, etc.

Surveys show residents do not appreciate the services provided by administrative departments. The list of accomplishments addresses this problem. But the cost of this service is overstated as noted below.

Department program costs are misleading because they do not show the substantial offsets.

The ARB program costs are offset by building revenues. Leaving this out is very misleading.

The Organization Chart color coding is confusing. Why should CDBG be treated differently from Central School? The ConCom Administrator is offset by fees.

List committees of residents monitored & supported

Provide a separate page for the ARB tables for improved clarity.

Why are room rental fees a performance indicator? What are they?

P155-159 Pensions & Health Insurance

Collecting these costs into one budget is convenient since these costs are administered as separate programs. But they are costs that are directly proportional to the number of employees. The cost of Personnel Services as listed for each department is considerably higher, as much as 30%, when these benefits are included. The budget information would be more transparent if the cost of these benefits were included, even if only approximately.

Discuss which benefits are paid to school employees.

P177 Capital Plan

Show how the 5% of the budget is computed

P207 Glossary

Add: Exempt Debt, Non-Exempt Debt, OPEB