

**Needham Finance Committee  
Minutes of Meeting of May 14, 2012**

The meeting of the Finance Committee was called to order by the Chair, Richard Reilly, at approximately 6:45 pm in the Great Plain Room, at the Town Hall.

Present from the Finance Committee:

Richard Reilly, Chair; Rick Zimbone, Vice Chair

Members: John Connelly, Richard Creem, Richard Lunetta, Gary McNeill, Steve Rosenstock, Lisa Zappala

Also Present:

Holly Clarke, Town Meeting Member

Louise Miller, Town Meeting Member

Lita Young, Town Meeting Member

Articles Discussed

**Annual Town Meeting Warrant**

Article 30: Appropriate General Fund Cash Capital

**Citizen Requests**

No citizens requested to speak.

**Annual Town Meeting Article 30: Appropriate General Fund Cash Capital**

Ms. Clarke asked the Committee to consider whether there is a way to provide funding for a playground at Newman School. According to the Park and Recreation Department, the wooden structure must be taken down. The parents had originally understood that a new one would cost \$150,000. Ms. Clarke stated that the estimated cost is now \$250,000 in order to be ADA compliant. School parents have raised approximately \$50,000-\$60,000. In addition, there is a pledge of \$100,000 from one family. Therefore, an additional \$100,000 is needed for the new playground. She stated that there is currently a second playground at the school that will remain. She added that traditionally, the costs of playgrounds are left to parents, but in this case \$250,000 is an exceptional amount. Mr. Reilly stated that this is an intellectually worthy expense, but there has always been a structured approach that allows every issue to be measured against other needs in Town. He stated that he would not be comfortable with the proposed single issue approach.

Ms. Zappala asked if the group had discussed this issue with the Town Manager, since she prioritizes the Capital Plan. Ms. Clarke stated that they had not, since they just came up with the idea because of the amount of free cash. She stated that the Town is proposing setting up a fund for field replacement, but there is a current need for the funds here. Mr. Connelly stated that after all the prioritizing and planning that has gone on, the Committee cannot be expected to support this kind of plan at this point, on the third night of Town Meeting. Ms. Zappala stated that she appreciates the need, but there are other needs and priorities that have been vetted, and

this expense would have needed to have been considered against those other needs. Ms. Miller stated that the Greene's Field playground had been in the Capital Plan two years ago and set for funding in FY13, but then it disappeared from last year's plan for FY12.

Mr. Rosenstock asked if the removal of the existing playground was discussed when the renovation project was planned. Ms. Clarke stated that it had not been discussed, and that the playground is still there and in use. However, Park and Recreation has stated that the playground is aged and not in good repair and must come down. Mr. Zimbone suggested that the group should work with Park and Recreation to construct playgrounds at Greene's Field, Newman, and any other places in need, and to bring it to the November Special Town Meeting for discussion. Mr. Reilly stated that he senses that the Committee feels that it is inappropriate to do this at the last minute. There was discussion whether funds from an article that fails at Town Meeting could be used for a different purpose such as this, or whether additional free cash removed from an item in an article could be appropriated in the Omnibus article or at the November Special Town Meeting.

Mr. Reilly asked if there is a specific funding request for specific items. Ms. Miller stated that they do not have plans, but the estimate came from the Director of Park and Recreation. Mr. Reilly asked if the playground might be eligible for funding with CPA money if the pending amendment to the law passes. The answer was not known. Mr. Lunetta suggested that the plan be developed further and the funding requested next year. Ms. Zappala suggested that the group speak with the Town Manager and the Director of Park and Recreation to try to determine a source of funding. Mr. Zimbone stated that he believes that there may be funding available in the fall. He stated that the Committee will need much more detailed information on the design where the money is proposed to come from.

### **Youth Commission Appointment**

Mr. Reilly stated that the Finance Committee's current appointee to the Board of the Youth Commission, Cathy Lunetta, is stepping down. Under the By-Laws, the Finance Committee appoints one of the members of the Youth Commission. Mr. Lunetta stated that ten years ago there was a vacancy on the Youth Commission Board. The Youth Services Director presented Mrs. Lunetta to the Finance Committee and recommended her appointment. He stated that the Director usually seeks a person who is interested in serving on the Board. He stated that since Youth Services takes in more money that it spends, there is not an apparent need for a Finance Committee member to be appointed to the Board. He stated that the Committee should think about what the relationship between the Committee and the Youth Commission Board appointee. He stated that in reality once the person is appointed, they do not check with the Finance Committee when making decisions. Mr. Reilly stated that the Committee will discuss the issue with the Youth Services Director.

### **Updates**

Mr. Zimbone stated that the Committee should anticipate an amendment to Annual Town Meeting Article 30, General Fund Cash Capital, on the floor at Town Meeting. Mr. Reilly stated that he would personally oppose a motion as discussed previously. Mr. Rosenstock stated that he

agreed. He stated that there are many ways to do this at an earlier stage in the process. Ms. Zappala stated that she is also concerned about the Committee giving the impression that people who have been involved with the Finance Committee can get an issue moved forward outside of the usual procedure.

Mr. Reilly suggested a possible motion: “Without taking a position on the merits of the underlying proposal, we think that the motion is procedurally flawed in that the issue has not been sufficiently exposed to the relevant committees nor integrated into the Town Manager’s Capital Plan.” Mr. Zimbone stated that he supported the language but that the motion should be considered only if there is a motion on Town Meeting floor, and the Committee reconvenes.

### **Recess**

MOVED: By Ms. Zappala that the Finance Committee recess the meeting and to reconvene as necessary during the course of Town Meeting. Mr. Lunetta seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion was approved by a vote of 8-0. The meeting was recessed at 7:17 pm.

### **Adjourn**

MOVED: By Mr. Zimbone that the meeting be adjourned, there being no further business. Ms. Zappala seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 8-0, at approximately 10:50 p.m.

Documents: Annual Town Meeting Warrant, May 7, 2012; May 14, 2012 Special Town Meeting Warrant.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Mizgerd  
Executive Secretary/Staff Analyst

*Approved May 30, 2012*