

Stoneham Finance and Advisory Board
Monday, July 25, 2016—7:30pm
Stoneham Town Hall Hearing Room

STONEHAM
TOWN CLERK
REGISTRARS

2016 AUG 31 A 11:05

ATTENDEES:

Patricia Walsh, *Chair*
Hilde McCormack, *Vice-Chair*

Ben Caggiano Stephanie Hayes
Thomas Dalton Angelo Mangino
Stephen Dapkiewicz Robert Verner
Julianne DeSimone

AGENDA:

1. Larry Means, FAB Meeting Minutes
2. FAB formal Policy and Procedure Discussion
3. Policy for requesting information/documents/reports from Department heads
4. Miscellaneous

MINUTES:

At 7:30pm, the Chair called the meeting to order, directing the Board to Agenda Item #1.

Town Moderator Larry Means asserted that the budget process at Town Meeting has been challenging and dysfunctional for the past decade. He suggested that a one-page budget, lacking detailed line items, is an inappropriate format for the Town Meeting to approve and vote on. In addition, Town Meeting has often voted to approve inappropriate and improper budgets that have had to be later remedied. Means told the FAB that financial mistakes have abounded, the Town has lost money unnecessarily due to budget errors, and money is regularly lost in unaccounted-for overspending.

He also said that, in his opinion, Town department heads had not treated the FAB with appropriate respect or decorum, and that department heads have provided an insufficient amount of information to the FAB.

Means suggested that the FAB should demand better financial practices. He suggested that the FAB should defer to the Town Administrator in the budgeting process, leaving the responsibility of meeting with the department heads to determine budget needs to the Administrator. Means also recommended consolidating all accounting responsibilities to the Town Accountant and reinstating a Town reserve fund controlled by the FAB in case of fiscal emergency. Means asserted that the FAB should be prepared to answer detailed financial queries at Town Meeting and should make financial decisions for the Town based on the most accurate and detailed information available.

Mr. Means yielded the floor and the Chair directed the Board to Agenda Item #2 and #3. The Chair introduced the topic by reminding the FAB that there are currently no formal, internal FAB policies regarding the presentation of topics to the board or the acceptable standards of

sources. She discussed the need to streamline information requests of town employees made by Board members. The Chair suggested that all information requests from FAB members should be made via the Chair of the Board in order to achieve this streamlining.

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Ms. Hayes, Mr. Dapkiewicz and the Vice-Chair expressed their agreement, and Mr. Dapkiewicz went on to express his opinion that the Town Accountant should be subjected to fewer “drop-in” information requests by FAB members. Mr. Dapkiewicz suggested that when FAB members want or need to consult with the Town Accountant, they should email or call him to set an appointment.

The Chair also highlighted the need for FAB members to be prepared and knowledgeable about meeting topics prior to the meeting. The Vice-Chair concurred, elaborating that it is difficult and sometimes impossible to sufficiently analyze new information and data mid-meeting.

The Chair and Mr. Dapkiewicz discussed the likelihood that the FAB will have less direct contact with Town department heads under the new Town Administrator. For that reason, it will be important for the FAB to work closely with the new Administrator.

The members of the Board expressed general consensus for the Chair’s proposal to centralize the information request process. The Vice-Chair moved to establish a policy whereby the members of the FAB filter all information requests to Town employees through the Chair. Mr. Dalton asked to clarify that individual members of the Board could still request information directly from Town employees, and the Chair confirmed that individual FAB members would still be permitted to directly contact and petition Town employees under this new internal policy. The Board voted unanimously in favor of the Vice-Chair’s motion.

The Chair directed the Board to Agenda Item #4.

With regard to the Stoneham Arena, the Chair raised the possibility that the Arena might be in need of additional funding in the near future for renovations, repairs, and alleged cost overruns. She asserted that the Arena’s financial troubles needed to be addressed by the entirety of the Town government, not simply the FAB alone. Mr. Verner expressed his desire to preempt problems at the Arena before the ice season begins. The Chair concurred, but suggested that the FAB should not act yet to address Arena difficulties without complete information and the assistance of the Town Administrator.

With regard to the ongoing problems with the Hiltz trash collection contract, the Chair recommended that the FAB wait until the Board of Selectmen had addressed and discussed the issue to take it up as an issue in order to avoid speculation and rumor.

Finally, the Chair reminded the Board that the Open Space and Recreation committee and the Stoneham Arena manager would be invited to the FAB’s next meeting, August 22, 2016, in order to address the Arena issues in detail.

Mr. Verner moved that the meeting be adjourned and all concurred.