

CHELMSFORD FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES

August 13, 2020



MEETING: A meeting virtual was held on Thursday, August 13, 2020 at 7:30 PM using Zoom Video Communications software.

PRESENT: J. Clancy, D. Goselin, E. Chambers, K. Duffett, and A. Tanini

ABSENT: A. Langford, V. Parks

ALSO PRESENT: P. Cohen, V. Crocker-Timmins, and public

HANDOUTS: PowerPoint Presentation on the Warren-Pohl Property sent to Finance Committee Members

The meeting was called to order at 7:31 PM.

J. Clancy read the following statement regarding the virtual meeting:

“Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Town of Chelmsford Finance Committee will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the Town’s website, at www.chelmsfordma.gov For this meeting, members of the public who wish to watch the meeting may do so by accessing the Chelmsford Telemedia website www.chelmsfordtv.org.”

Approval of Minutes:

June 4, 2020:

K. Duffett made a motion to accept the minutes of June 4, 2020 as written. E. Chambers seconded the motion. K. Duffett, E. Chambers, D. Goselin, and J. Clancy voted in favor of the motion. A. Tanini abstained from voting. The motion passed. The minutes were approved as written.

Special Town Meeting Warrant Article – Authorization to Acquire 54 Acres:

P. Cohen reported that there would be a Special Town Meeting held on August 24, 2020 to vote on the acquisition of the Warren-Pohl property. He stated that at 53.32 acres the Warren-Pohl property was the second largest of the available private agricultural, forest and estate parcels in

Chelmsford. He stated that the Warren family who had owned the land for generations had reached out to the Town with their intent to sell. P. Cohen stated that another parcel available was the Misty Meadow parcel, which was 41.16 acres, but the Chelmsford Water district had an interest in this parcel and had the right to first refusal. P. Cohen reported that the Warren-Pohl property had frontage on the following roads:

- Acton Road (448 feet)
- Bartlett Street (82 feet)
- Boston Road (16 feet)
- Fay Street (370 feet)
- Hall Road (31 feet)
- Parker Road (59 feet with access to Wright Reservation)

He stated that the land had been appraised by Avery Associates at \$1 million and by Minuteman Appraisals at \$1.3 million. He said that the agreed upon sale price was \$1,150,000. He stated that potential for development was considered in the appraisal cost, but the lower appraisal from Avery Associates did not include road access in their appraisal. P. Cohen stated that potential uses for the land included agricultural use, walking trails, and a municipal wellfield. He explained that using a portion of the land as a municipal wellfield would be in keeping with open space and any historic restrictions. He explained that there would be no requirement for a treatment plant, and they would sink the well and have a small shed on the property. He noted that the land use would be included in the Town Meeting vote and in the preservation restriction.

P. Cohen reported that J. Sousa and D. Lussier had met with Community Preservation regarding how the acquisition would be funded. He explained that it would be funded under a 10-year debt service of \$1.2 million, which at an interest rate of 2%, would result in a principal payment of \$120,000 per year. He said that the interest would start at \$25,800 in FY2022 and decrease each year until ending at \$2,400 in FY2031. He stated that the total first year debt service of principal and interest would be \$145,800 and the total for the last year would be \$122,400. P. Cohen reported that the current Community Preservation fund balance was \$2,394,073. He pointed out that the timing was good for the CPF to take on this debt because the \$2.8 million town hall projects would come off the debt service in FY2021. He added that the \$785,000 debt service from the Sheehan Farm would be coming off in FY2023. He indicated that Community Preservation would be able to absorb this new debt into the existing debt service schedule.

P. Cohen reported that the appropriation request at Town Meeting would be for \$1.2 million borrowing with the debt service funded by the Community Preservation Fund. He stated that \$1,150,000 of this would be the purchase price paid to the owner and \$50,000 would be used for the preservation restriction and a baseline report of the property. He stated that similar arrangements for a baseline report had been made in the past for Sunny Meadow and Sheehan Farm when they used the Audubon Society which held the land trust.

K. Duffett asked how the water district would be able to purchase the Misty Meadow property. P. Cohen replied that the water district had free cash. He added that the purchase price for that property was just under \$1 million at \$950,000. He stated that the Chelmsford Water District would be holding a special district meeting next week to discuss the purchase.

E. Chambers asked if the conceptual development plan came from the appraisal. P. Cohen replied that it did. He stated that the one appraisal had included a sub-division off Bartlett Street. He noted that from the review of the land this development was plausible, but this plan was not a formal examination and appraisal for that purpose.

E. Chambers asked if there would be an overlap before the end of the year in FY2021 where this purchase would go on the debt service and the town halls would not yet have come off. P. Cohen replied that there would be no overlap because the first payment from the new purchase would not be on the debt service until FY2022. He pointed out that this would be on the Community Preservation debt service and would not impact the general fund.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

Vote on Special Town Meeting Warrant Article:

K. Duffett made a motion that the Finance Committee recommends approval of the special town meeting warrant article as presented. E. Chambers seconded the motion. J. Clancy stated that the article was straight forward. K. Duffett added that it was ideal timing with the debt service coming off before the new debt would be added. She said that she was glad the Town had this opportunity. J. Clancy called the vote. All voted in favor of the motion. The Finance Committee will recommend approval of the Special Town Meeting Warrant Article by a unanimous vote (5/0).

Discuss Plan for Report:

P. Cohen stated that they would provide a handout to all Town Meeting Representatives regarding the special warrant article. The decision was made that the Finance Committee would not need to prepare a separate report.

Fall Town Meeting Schedule and Meeting Plans:

J. Clancy asked when the Fall Town Meeting Warrant would be available. P. Cohen replied that the Board of Selectmen planned to sign the warrant on September 14th. He stated that at this time Town Meeting was still scheduled for Monday, October 19th. He noted that currently there were 15 articles on the warrant including one zoning article, two general by-law amendments and the routine fall articles. P. Cohen stated that they could schedule a Tri-board meeting with the schools after September 14th.

K. Duffett made a motion to adjourn. E. Chambers seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela A. Morrison