

TOWN OF PEMBROKE
APPROVED
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
16 SEPTEMBER 2020

Linda Peterson, Chairperson opened the meeting of the Advisory Committee via ZOOM/PACTV- VIRTUAL and read the statement pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law at 7:03PM on 16 September 2020.

Also present were Stephen Walsh, Sandra Beaton, Matthew Norton, Matthew Rushing, John Scholl and Kristi Cullinane

Absent: Kelly Seifert and Tim Landy

Guests: Bill Chenard, Town Manager

Linda welcomed the new members to their first meeting tonight; John Scholl and Krisi Cullinane. They're scheduled to be confirmed by the BOS on Wednesday, September 23, 2020 at 7:00pm. They're unable to participate in voting tonight.

Linda welcomed Bill Chenard, Town Manager who will provide an update on multiple topics.

- Bill let the committee know that the BOS will be discussing the pros and cons for a winter Town Meeting. The big challenge is time. The Town Clerk is preparing for the Presidential election including mail-in ballots.
- He met with Michael Buckley, Town Accountant preparing a budget report to be distributed to Advisory on a quarterly basis.
- Bill shared his screen to review the Fire Department Contract. The contract has been voted and approved by the BOS. A copy of the contract will be forwarded to Advisory. The contract is for three years 7/1/19 - 6/30/22. They will receive a 2% wage increase each year, including a retro for FY19. Longevity will be amended. Bill noted that we want to be competitive, not the highest paid nor the lowest paid. For an all paramedic Fire Department we are not the highest or the lowest. The Degree pay will also be amended. Bill was asked if there are other union contracts that were delayed due to Covid-19 that would be paid a retro. Bill said there was a freeze on wage increases for Department Heads until January 1, 2021. He is not at liberty to discuss contracts in negotiations. Linda asked if longevity increases are comparable across all employees. Bill said that would be a challenge to do with the different salary scenerios. We want to be comparable and fair; longevity numbers differ between unions. Stephen Walsh asked if we could role the longevity into the base pay. Bill said it's a great idea but is a challenge to communicate if you're giving 2½ %. Bill said they got language changes for clarity; nothing financial. They agreed to come to the table to talk about continuing education. The Fire Department leaders and fire fighters recognize the need to keep up with new technology and techniques. Negotiations are not a one way street.
- Bill outlined the CARES Act Funding Summary in four phases for Pembroke: phase 1) \$808,560.76; phase 2) \$586,702.46; phase 3) \$149,434.76; phase 4) \$808,560.76 for a total of \$2,353,258.30. This money is not a revenue replacement. Bill noted they're rolling out a remote building permit program; ipads for teachers and chrome books for students. He anticipates using all available funds and hoping we don't have an increase in Covid-19 cases in Pembroke.

Linda thanked Bill.

Linda asked if there was an update on the small business grant program. Stephen Walsh said they had their meeting to distribute the funding and it was all set. Sandra Beaton asked if we get to know how it was distributed. Matthew Norton said they received requests from approximately 30 companies. Some businesses were restaurants, athletic companies, a horse farm, day care center, auto body, manufacturing company. The working group looked at the impact on each business in making their selection. The most they distributed per business differed; the most distributed to one business was \$3,500. The total amount of the grant was \$30,000.

Upon motion moved by Sandra Beaton and 2nd by Matthew Rushing to approve the meeting minutes of September 2, 2020.

VOTED¹: To accept the meeting minutes of September 2, 2020 via **Role Call:** Stephen Walsh YES; Matthew Rushing YES; Sandra Beaton YES; Matthew Norton YES; Linda Peterson YES

Linda noted the committee received a “draft” document of the Advisory By-Law today from the working group. Matthew Rushing said these changes are going to have to be approved at a town meeting so we have some time. This will give the committee time to digest. He said they looked at changes that made sense and looked at a couple things and went back and forth with Tim Landy. He didn’t have a chance to connect with Kelly Seifert.

- 1) It makes sense to insert into Article 10 (the budget process) which is not yet finalized. Once finalized we should reference that.
- 2) Reference to rules “the committee making their own rules”; recommended this should be documented and posted to the town website.
- 3) The big change that would have the most impact and he looked at other towns Advisory & Finance Committees (6-7 towns) is a reference to “Investigatory & Review Powers” codifying the fact that Advisory would have the authority to look through and examine the books, accounts, records of any board and/or department as deemed necessary for the committee’s functions. Sandra Beaton noted that Bill Chenard talks about this all the time. It’s consistent with the budget process and adds more weight to the committee when having these discussions. Linda asked how this would fit in with what Bill Chenard does as he will be setting the budget and Advisory will review it. Matthew Rushing said it gets to giving Advisory more weight when having more discussion in meeting with department heads and more authority when we request things and responses. Linda said it seems strong. Kristi Cullinane noted that who is in place now, we may not have a problem but when we’re all gone as members, you don’t know who’s going to be in place later. We should get as much transparency on paper so someone won’t say “it doesn’t say that we have to give you our numbers”. Take the “personal” out of it and think of it as policy and procedure. Linda suggested we go back through the Town Manager and not Advisory. Matthew Rushing said we could and we could vote on and we should also get Bill’s feedback. He noted that it’s across the by-laws; you’re going to find that the BOS will be reviewing the by-laws in the next year as they are very ambiguous. Stephen Walsh said the terminology is going to create a lot of problems. The employees report to Bill Chenard so you can invite them but unless Bill gives them authorization, they don’t have to come. When you start investigating people which we don’t have authority for, we’re not an investigator board, and we’re an Advisory board. Legislature set us up as an Advisory board. We can go to Town Meeting and ask for this but most of things we’re asking for are available to us under the “Freedom of Information Act”. And now we want to start talking to an employee, are we an investigator board or Advisory board, because as soon as we start calling employees in, they will call their union, the union rep will call their lawyer and now we’re going to need a lawyer. It all sounds good but in a way there are a lot of complications with what is written here. Matthew Rushing said if the issue is with the word “Investigatory” we can change it. Sandra Beaton suggested the word “audit”. Linda was wondering what town this was clipped from. Matthew Rushing thought it was Newton. He said if the issue is with the language, let’s propose changes to the language. If the issue is with the paragraph, we can propose not to make a change in which case we can leave things the way they are that people are comfortable with, that’s perfectly fine. If people have edits they can send them to Donna. Stephen Walsh said he thinks he knows where he’s going with this on things we don’t get a copy of, like the audit report don’t get the recommendations from the audit report, what needs to change, the financial aspect on how the town runs. That is what we need copies of. Linda doesn’t want to tighten up the bylaws. We have no experience with the Town Manager as he’s only been here since May. It may be that some issues we had prior, we don’t think we’re going to have those issues anymore. Don’t want to look like were adversarial with him. Sandra Beaton said it could be good to have it in writing so it can continue past Bill. Matthew Rushing said this needs to be personality agnostic.
- 4) The other thing the group was looking at is clarification on the nomination and appointment process for Advisory. Collapsing what is two different processes one for regular appointment and a mid-term appointment into one process. He did talk with Steve Dodge and he agreed this makes the most sense. The current description of the committee is solely focused on financial, it should read all municipal matters, or something like that.

Matthew Norton agreed with Matthew Rushing and Sandra Beaton, the intention here is to look at our by-laws and there are some areas we can clean up. Here tonight, he certainly needs some time to cut and paste like Matt did.

He would also be interested in taking a look at other towns and Advisory Committee by-laws. We got a conversation going and that's always good. Linda said if it works for us does it matter what works for other towns. Matt Norton said there are Best Practices we can share from other towns he's not saying that just because another town does something we will. It's worth it if we're going to review our by-laws; and Matt Rushing has a committee with Tim Landy and Kelly Seifert to do that. Looking at other town's bylaws on their website was part of that due diligence. Linda suggested we look at comparable towns; maybe South Shore towns. Sandra Beaton noted the work she and another member of the committee went through last year in reviewing other town's Town Warrant process, that's what they did; reviewed their websites. The towns the committee recommended at that time were Hingham and Norwell.

The committee will review this "draft" document and send their edits to Donna for review at the next meeting or continue the process over multiple meetings.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 24, 2020 at 6:00pm. The October meetings are not yet confirmed.

Steve asked is we could use the educational channel for meetings? It might give the town more meetings on ZOOM; maybe less conflicts for meeting time slots. Stephen will stop by Town Hall this week and ask. He will also ask if Advisory is able to hold meetings in Veterans Hall.

John Scholl asked if that was typical that a union contract is completed negotiated and the details are giving to us in front of the town. Linda explained how the union negotiation process works. John suggested that maybe Advisory could get involved prior to negotiations, as they are getting prepared to go into negotiations it would be helpful to get our advice on areas of what things we can negotiate on such as compensation and what they look like.

Stephen Walsh suggested if we're working on bylaws, the committee might want to put this language in to the bylaws about an Advisory member participate. John Scholl said they should at least get our input before they start the process. Matthew Rushing suggested we make that an agenda topic for Bill Chenard next time he meets with Advisory; maybe even write up the language.

Advisory adjourned at 8:37PM.

Respectfully submitted

Stephen Walsh, Clerk