

## **TMMA Executive Committee Minutes: May 10, 2006**

### **Attendance:**

#### **TMMA Officers:**

Gloria Bloom – (Chair Pct 4)  
David Horton – (Vice Chair Pct 8)  
Andy Friedlich – (Treasurer Pct 5)  
David L. Kaufman – (Communication Officer Pct 6)  
Darwin Adams – (Clerk Pct 3)

#### **Precinct Officers:**

Pct 9: Vicki Blier  
Pct 8: Melinda Walker  
Pct 7: Jim Courtemanche, Sheri Mahoney  
Pct 6: Alan Lazarus, Edith Sandy  
Pct 5: Eph Weiss  
Pct 3: Alex Nedzel  
Pct 2: Barry Orenstein  
Pct 1: Jon Cole

#### **Presenters:**

Carl Valente (Town Manager)  
Michael Young (Budget Officer)  
Robert Addelson (Asst. Mgr. For Finance)

#### **Guests:**

#### **Agenda:**

Gloria called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm in the Reading Room in the basement of Cary Hall.

#### **The “Brown Book” and the “Blue Book”:**

Gloria asked if Carl Valente, Michael Young, and Robert Addelson could share their observations regarding this year’s Town Meeting. Carl asked the group how we felt about Town Meeting and the TMMA Informational Meeting. He was particularly interested in the “Brown Book” (preliminary budget book) and the “Blue Book” (final budget book) because he felt that this was a “lot of paper” and wondered how TMMA felt about this.

Darwin Adams asked if there was some formal requirement for paper copies of Town Meeting documents, or if it might be possible to use electronic documents.

Andy Friedlich expressed a strong preference for paper documents because they are much easier to read and to work with. David Kaufman agreed.

The group discussed how we might get a sense for how Town Meeting would feel about a change toward electronic documents. Perhaps we should circulate a poll on the TMMA list.

Michael Young said he had observed 2 trends:

1. That many TM documents are online these days.
2. That we have a “Budget Supplement” spreadsheet showing a budget summary and a comparison with previous years.

Carl Valente explained that this was the first year we have had a “Brown Book” and that it was created because there were many new people working on the budget this year and that the process was at risk of being late. So they decided to create the preliminary budget allowing Town Meeting and the Boards/Committees to get ready for Town Meeting. The “Blue Book”, the final budget, was completed just in time for Town Meeting and was in the same format as in previous years.

During the discussion, several points were raised:

- Perhaps we could have a version of the Brown Book sent to all TM members and only send the Blue Book to those requesting it.
- Factual differences normally occur between the Brown Book, the Blue Book and the final Town Meeting motions as the budget is developed. These differences might confuse Town Meeting members.
- Some people felt that very few Town Meeting members read the Blue Book in detail.
- Are we going to need a Brown Book next year?
- We don’t want to create excessively large documents.
- There is actually a “White Book” circulated to the Selectmen and Boards/Committee that contains more information than the Blue Book.
- Are we overwhelming people with paper?

No motions were made regarding changes to the Brown and Blue books, but there was a consensus to continue discussing the issue.

### **2006 TMMA Informational Meeting:**

Gloria and Carl both wondered how the group felt about this year’s informational meeting. Gloria expressed concern that we did not spend time talking about Capital items. Andy Friedlich reported that he received many very positive comments about this year’s meeting. Several people noted that only Planning Board item was discussed (Starwood Hotel rezoning) and perhaps we should have found time for more PB articles. The group agreed to continue this conversation during the June 15<sup>th</sup> Town Meeting Wrap-up Session.

### **Budget Process Timing:**

Mr. Valente noted that having an override vote in June makes budget planning difficult. Funds cannot be committed until the final budget is known. In November, it is usually clear whether or not an override will be required. “At risk” lists need to be prepared. This puts the Town “in Limbo” because we do not want to hire people and plan programs unless we know we will have sufficient funds.

Having programs “at risk” can create poor morale among town employees. Some employees who are concerned that their jobs might be eliminated seek jobs in other towns even before the override vote is taken. This year, the Town placed a freeze on hiring in January.

In some other towns, the override vote occurs prior to Town Meeting. The Selectmen did discuss the possibility of scheduling future override votes prior to Town Meeting. The Selectmen have the authority to make such changes but felt it needed public discussion.

David Kaufman suggested that if there is a Fall Town Meeting this year, TM could discuss this matter at that time.

**Voter Information Meeting (override) May 25:**

TMMA is sponsoring a public meeting regarding the 2006 budget and override. The meeting will be held at the Clarke Middle School Auditorium from 7:30pm to 9:00 pm on Thursday, May 25<sup>th</sup>. The following officials and staff will be presenting and answering questions from the public.

- Town Manager Carl Valente – and staff
- School Superintendent Dr. Paul Ash – and staff
- Appropriation Committee Chairman Dr. Alan Levine
- Representatives from the Board of Selectmen and School Committee

Alex Nedzel and David Horton have been helping to plan this meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to provide citizens with objective, factual information about the override. The 2004 information meeting tended to be very long with each group or department making a speech about how they would be affected by the override. The plan for this year calls for a more concise speaking program followed by informal discussions afterward. The meeting will be scheduled for 2 hours, but the plan will be to complete discussions in an hour and a half. This will leave time for more discussion.

There was some discussion about having “Yes” and “No” speakers to present their views. The consensus was that this is not a forum or debate. It should be focused on facts provided by our town professionals, boards and committees.

Someone suggested that while Van Seasholes would do an excellent job as moderator, that getting someone who does not live in Lexington would ensure a more objective meeting. There was general agreement that this was a good idea and that Marge Battin would probably be able to find someone who could act as moderator.

Melinda Walker asked if literature from the “Yes” and “No” groups should be allowed at the meeting. The group was not clear about the legal issues of campaign related literature on school property. Jim Courtemanche volunteered to find out what can be allowed at this meeting.

**Minutes of the February 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting:**

The minutes were approved unanimously

**Treasurer’s Report:**

Alessandro Alessandrini arranged for Andy Friedlich to present his report. The report was approved unanimously.

**Petty Cash:**

Vicki Blier and Gloria Bloom noted that several expenditures by the members of the Executive Committee have not yet been reimbursed because the Committee does not ordinarily meeting during Town Meeting. Could we create a “petty cash” policy that would authorize the Treasurer to reimburse small expenditures without prior approval of the Committee.

There was some discussion about how to define this policy so that “small expenditures” could be defined. We agreed that the Executive Committee could authorize a certain amount to be used as petty cash. The Treasurer could then reimburse expenditures until the authorized amount was depleted.

Andy Friedlich made the following motions:

“That a TMMA Petty Cash fund be created from which the Executive Committee officers are authorized to spend to meet TMMA expenses.”

This motion passed unanimously.

“I move that we fund the petty cash account with \$200.”

This motion passed unanimously.

**Town Meeting Wrap-up Session – June 15:**

This meeting is scheduled to take place in the Selectman’s Meeting Room at 7:00pm. There will be a half hour discussion between Lorraine Fournier and John Bartenstein about allowing non-TMMA people who are on Town boards and committees to post on the TMMA list serve.

At 7:30, the “wrap-up” discussion begins.

**Appointment of Liaison to the Economic Development Task Force of the 2020 Committee:**

Gloria asked for a volunteer to work with the 2020 committee. This would involve 4 or 5 meetings in the fall. The position of Economic Development Officer is on the “at risk” list for the 2006 override. Therefore, our economic development plans are currently uncertain. Gloria volunteered to send an email to the Executive Committee members.

**Email list for TMMA Executive Committee:**

Darwin Adams asked if we could have a small email list for the Executive Committee. This would replace our individual “address book” entries for the committee. David Kaufman volunteered to create a list called Lex-TMMAExec@yahoo.com

Meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.

Submitted by Darwin Adams, Clerk