

**TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
March 23, 2011**

<b>Present:</b>	Al Collings	Johanna Barry, Executive Secretary
	Tom Schnare	Barry Nadon, Jr., Selectman
	Phil Landine	Michael Frew, Selectman
	Roy Roberts	Marie Arsenault, Accountant
	Jack Tivnan	Keith Arsenault, Treasurer
	Diane Vayda	John Cook, Quaboag Current
	Nicole Vongratsamy	

The meeting was called to order by Chair Al Collings at 6:32 p.m.

**Minutes:** Jack Tivnan made a motion to accept the minutes of March 16, 2011. Phil Landine second. Vote 7-0 to approve the minutes as presented.

**Review FY Budget Worksheet:** Estimated free cash fiscal year 2012 is \$629,333.00. Review of Articles: #17: Consultant Fees for Dredging Lake suggested putting off until fall. Article #19: Consultant Fees for Fountain Restoration. Jack Tivnan asked if they had contacted the Irving England Fund. #21: Water Department Bylaw change. Al Collings asked Johanna to get copies of this bylaw. #31: MTBE. Jack Tivnan said he would support but suggested putting off until fall. Marie Arsenault said the money will go into the general fund as of June 30, 2011. Al Collings asked Johanna to have an updated draft before next Wednesday's meeting. The second page of the FY12 Budget Worksheet contained the Articles to be deferred to the Fall Town Meeting.

**Budget #38 Council on Aging:** Roy Roberts and Al Collings met with Senior Center Director, Cindy Norden. She wanted us to be aware of a problem with a broken sewer pipe. They are trying to fit another pipe through this and hope that it will work. She said from time to time she needs a maintenance person. She will talk to Johanna Barry. Looking ahead, the Center will need some painting. Barry Nadon suggested contacting the Sheriff's Department for this. Cindy Norden says she puts in more hours than she is paid for and would like at some time to discuss this.

**Budget #41 Library:** Lisa Careau, Director and members of the Library Trustees were present to answer questions and discuss the budget. Lisa Careau said it is a certifiable budget. Al Collings said the salary lines are 2% and expense slightly over at \$734.06 and materials over at \$65.00. Al Collings wanted to know if there was an alternative to rugs/bookcases or options or alternatives for some or all of the cost and what was the split between carpet and bookcases. Lisa asked "Do you want us to not do the project?" Al Collings said the concern was with funding. Lisa said she would never recommend doing only the carpeting. Everything must be moved out as the shelves were put on top of the rugs. She felt the shelves were old and not suitable for the books, rugs are wrinkled, and bathroom linoleum had holes. She did not know the exact cost but felt the bookcases

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would cost more and the carpeting about \$20,000.00. Al Collings asked if there were other sources of funding available and the answer was that they have an endowment of some encumbered and some unencumbered of \$70,000.00. They have used this to offset salaries, heat, books and special purchases. Al Collings asked if the Town provided one-half of the money, would you use the endowment or change the project. Lisa said she would not change the project and does not see doing one without the other. The Trustees viewed this as a package. Al Collings asked if you would defer the project and she asked for how long. She felt that prices would go up. Phil Landine asked if she was going to put a rug or rug squares. She said that none of the rug companies that she contacted had offered her the squares. Jack Tivnan suggested she check with the schools because they had samples and information. With squares, if one was damaged, it could be replaced. The Trustees said they would do what they had to in order for the project to be done. They had received \$5,000.00 from Country Bank to put toward the moving. The total cost of the project is \$73,500.00 and had asked the Town for \$66,000.00. They would tap the endowment for the balance. Computers: The Library has eight and replaces the two oldest ones each year. The oldest computers are six years old and CWMARS recommends replacing every 3-4 years. Lisa Careau said that they are planning to pay for the two computers this year out of their endowment and they had not requested new computers from the technology budget but would next year. Stipend: The Trustees want to give Director Lisa Careau a \$1,500.00 stipend for excellent performance. Funding would be either from library endowments or library budget. Al Collings said that this was a personnel issue setting a precedent and not a funding issue. Is she not just doing her job? Should managers doing the same be given a stipend and where do we draw the line. Tom Schnare said the Advisory Committee definitely needs to have the grants and endowment reports. Al Collings said that we have had them in the past and we should ask for them.

**Budget #7 Tax Collector:** Teresa Barrett was present to discuss her budget. Al Collings said there were discussions a year ago about Vadar Software System and we are moving in that direction. Teresa Barrett said she met with Vadar and a proposal of \$16,243.00 with a \$2,000.00 stop Point charge was obtained. Cost savings would come in six years. Keith Arsenault presented a proposal for Vadar software systems with the accountant and the assessor's office utilizing one. According to Keith, the savings would be approximately \$2,000.00 a year. The first stage has been approved by the Advisory Committee and Selectmen and will be in place July. The second stage would be to include the tax collector. Al Collings asked Keith Arsenault to work with Terry Barrett on the second stage and Terry was agreeable. Phil Landine asked the tax collector if she used the lockbox. She said she did and it works very well.

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**Budget # 20 Parking Clerk:** Teresa Barrett was present to discuss her budget. Al Collings question whether we needed this budget as no money had been spent last year. Terry asked if she could keep \$50.00 and the answer was yes.

**Budget #12 Planning Board:** Mert Kenniston and Tim Morrell were present to answer questions. Al Collings asked about the Back Lot Zoning Bylaw. Tim Morrell explained the bylaw and passed out copies. Jack Tivnan asked what was the risk or downside of not having this bylaw. Mert Kenniston explained that if you have a back lot with an access you can build a full-scale subdivision. With the bylaw, you can build a home with a 50 foot strip with a driveway. They held a Public Hearing and there were no negative issues. Tom Schnare asked who does this help. The answer is there are 6-7 existing properties and other areas of land that could be created. A back lot would be good for a farm. They said that some other towns have a similar bylaw.

**At 8:07 Chair Al Collings called for a 5 minute break. The meeting reconvened at 8:12 p.m.**

**Budget #52 Drop Off Center:** Highway superintendent, Jim Daley presented a quote from Safety-Kleen of \$1,950.40 to remove antifreeze from a tank that is contaminated and cannot be disposed of in a regular fashion. This would require a Reserve Fund Transfer for the full amount. Motion made by Jack Tivnan to transfer \$1,950.40 from the Reserve Fund to pay for Contaminated Tank Pump-out Services by Safety-Kleen. Tom Schnare second. Vote 7-0 to approve the transfer of \$1,950.40.

**Budget #33 Highway Department:** Highway superintendent Jim Daley was present to discuss his budget. There was a question on salary figures. This will be refigured. Question asked why line item Miscellaneous Road Materials was decreased to \$3,440.00. The answer was that a new line item was created for Catch Basin cleaning and money from Miscellaneous Road Materials was added to this line. Question asked about Winter Salt and Sand funds. At this time, we are over budget by \$6,500 in wages and \$11,759.00 in salt and sand. This can be paid with a transfer from the Reserve Fund. Tom Schnare asked if the Highway was on the Fleet Schedule for a vehicle. Al said he was for a sidewalk plow for next year. Barry Nadon has suggested a Whacker seen at a trade show for \$60,000.00.

**Road Evaluation Committee:** Bill King, Mike Frew and Keith Arsenault were present to discuss. Keith passed out a copy of the report given to the Selectmen with recommendations for road repair/construction as well as suggestions for financing. Financing: A. Continue to fund projects as Chapter 90 funds are available.

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- B. Add \$35,000 to road maintenance annually to protect the existing roadways from wear and cracking.
- C. Add \$35,000 to road maintenance and appropriate \$150,000 from available funds/budget to supplement Chapter 90.
- D. Vote to bond sufficient funding to bring all roads and streets up to good condition and fund annually sufficient moneys to maintain the existing road/street condition.

The estimated cost of a 10-year bond for 1.5 million dollars with \$210,000 payment each year would increase the average homeowner's tax bill about \$120.00. Jack Tivnan said he had no problem with debt exclusion but that if there were two (school and roads) debt exclusions that they both might fail. Al Collings thought Option C was good for 2012 and we will revisit the bond issue next year. This would have to be done every year to keep up. Jack Tivnan said that this was a Selectmen's issue. Al Collings thanked the members for a great job and would like to revisit every six months.

**Budget #32 Education:** Superintendent Bret Kustigian, Joe Scanlon and members of the School Committee were present. Al Collings said he wanted to talk about compensation. Last week, the School Committee passed out their Fiscal Year 2012 Operational Budget of which has been reviewed and the Advisory Committee notes there are some "hefty salary adjustments" on Pages 12 & 13. Lori Loughlin spoke and stated that the vote was 12-0 on salaries and this was in the best interest for the district, for the taxpayers and the children. It was felt that they needed to "lock up the Superintendent" for three years. Yes, it was a lot of money but the school needed stability. Jack Tivnan asked if he signed a contract for three years and the answer was yes he did. Mike Frew asked is the \$20,000.00 locked in for three years and the answer was yes. Phil Landine said that they should look at the MCAS scores for the past three years at the elementary school, which were "tanked." Al Collings asked how do you reconcile a 9.4% increase for administration and 1.5 for teachers. The School Committee stated that our superintendent is lower paid than others in the State and that they would take money elsewhere in the budget to fund this if necessary. Al Collings said they should think about phasing the increases over a two to three year period. The School Committee said they appreciated the perspective from the Advisory Committee. Al Collings said this was a big issue and you did not bring this up at last week's meeting.

**Technology & Capital Improvement Plan:** Al Collings questioned computers in every room and how effective was this. Phil Landine asked is four in every room really where you want to be. Bret Kustigian said it was not close to where we would want to be. He would like to envision K-12 each with laptops but for now there was no better way. Phil Landine questioned the 5-year shelf life of a computer. Bret stated that his technology director believes this set up will last for ten years. Al Collings asked when do we get a

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“breather” and make a commitment that the excess over foundation is going to be zero. Jack Tivnan said that when he first became a selectman the school budget was 27% and now it is 60% of the Town’s yearly budget and the way things were going the school was going to “eat up” everything we have. The debt exclusion for West Brookfield totals \$1,026,236.00. This will have to be approved by ballot and at Town Meeting. The School Committee will need to get the exact wording of the debt exclusion to the West Brookfield Town Clerk tomorrow to get it on the ballot.

At next week’s meeting, we will talk about the overall budget.

Jack Tivnan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Roy Roberts second. Voted 7-0 to adjourn the meeting at 9:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine M. Long  
Secretary