

***Westwood Finance and Warrant Commission
FEBRUARY 27, 2024 PUBLIC HEARING
IN PERSON
7:00 PM
Meeting Minutes***

Finance Commission Chairperson George Hertz called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

Finance and Warrant Commission members who were present: John Carey, James Ferraro, Lauren FitzPatrick, Seth Frederickson, Mike Gay, George Hertz, George Laham, George Maroun, Kristina Patyjewicz, Christopher Poreda, Sean Weller, and Alexander Yale. Member(s) who were authorized prior to the meeting, participated remotely via speakerphone: William Bruce Jr.

Chairperson Hertz then granted permission to Westwood Media Center to live stream and record the meeting. He also asked if anyone else would like to record this meeting.

He then welcomed all participants, members, presenters and members of public and press to the FinCom February 27, 2024 Public Hearing.

Afterwards, Chairperson Hertz led members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Finance Commission administrator, Ms. Wong then called the ROLL.

Members were provided with the final agenda and all other related materials prior to the meeting.

Prior to the evening's presentations, Chairperson Hertz made some introductory comments:

- He went over the process for the evening: Presenters will present each warrant article and allow FinCom members to ask questions. Other attendees with the presenting team may raise their hands to speak also. At the end of the hearing, there will be time for public participation.

Public Hearing Evening Presenters:

- Marianne LeBlanc Cummings [Select Board Chair], Christopher Coleman [Town Administrator], Members of the Select Board – 2024 ATM “Select Board” Warrant Articles #1 -4, 13

The Chair introduced the evening's first presentation. Ms. Marianne LeBlanc Cummings [Select Board Chair], Mr. Christopher Coleman [Town Administrator], and members of the Select Board were present. Ms. Cummings called the Select Board's meeting to order at 7:02PM. Ms. Cummings presented Select Board Warrant Article # 1-4. Members asked questions after each warrant article. Select Board #4 was revised as of February 26th at the Select Board's meeting. The amendment is to make the language gender neutral, to adjust some grammar, to make correction as to who appoints the animal control officer and to update the fines to meet the state law. The original language about

leashed and under control is not being proposed at this time. Vice Chair Poreda asked if the language in Section 184-4.A.(3) will therefore remain the same as it has for several decades, which he believes requires pets to be leashed at all times. One of the members expressed a different view of that language.

Select Board #13 – Mr. Coleman provided some background information in regards to this article. The proposal is to adopt a fee structure over a four-year calendar period. Vice Chair Poreda asked Mr. Coleman to double check if the dollar amount is incorrect for the tanker vehicle for calendar year 2026.

Chairperson Hertz questioned if the following items will become miscellaneous warrant articles:

1. Will there be a potential home rule petition article to add a 2% fee upon the sale of a residency at Westwood?
 - a. Ms. Cummings confirmed this issue on the 2% real estate transfer fee (imposed on buyers) will not be an article going into Town Meeting. She clarified that this was an article brought to Town Meeting in 2006 but it was not passed at that time. Ms. Cummings asked the Long Range Financial Planning Committee to study this issue as the Select Board is looking into other resources for capital needs.
2. The Select Board is back to negotiations with Hale Education on the Conservation Restriction. Is there any chance that the Hale Conservation Restriction will be used as a potential warrant article?
 - a. Ms. Cummings stated this issue may become one of the miscellaneous warrant articles. The Town renewed discussions about collaborating to protect Hale's lands. She asked the Commission to not make any assumptions as to what is being discussed relative to the original proposal. Ms. Cummings promised that information related to the Hale will be provided to the Commission as soon as possible.
 - b. The Chair mentioned that the Final Public Hearing will be on March 26th. He asked Ms. Cummings what the process will be to allow residence input. Ms. Cummings stated she doesn't have an answer to this question at this time as it depends on how things shake out. Chairperson Hertz would also like to know if this will be potential borrowing article. Ms. Cummings stated that she could not answer that question.
 - c. One member suggested to form a rapid force subcommittee to focus on the Hale Conservation and to prepare a presentation to the Commission. Chairman Hertz expressed agreement with that suggestion.

In response to the Chairperson's question about the use remaining miscellaneous articles, Mr. Coleman stated there are no other issues on his radar that will use the other miscellaneous warrant articles. Chairperson Hertz thanked Ms. Cummings, Mr. Gotti and Mr. Coleman for their presentation. The Select Board adjourned their meeting at 7:25PM.

The Chair asked if the Select Board could stay behind to answer any public questions.

- Members of the Charter Review Committee – 2024 ATM “Select Board” Warrant Articles #5-12

Chairperson Hertz introduced the evening's next presentation: Members of the Charter Review Committees, Mr. Christopher Coleman [Town Administrator], Mr. Pat Ahearn [Town Council], and Ms. Lauren Goldberg [Legal Counsel] were present. Mr. Peter Cahill called the Charter Review Committee's meeting to order at 7:27PM. Then, Ms. Nancy Hyde presented what the Charter is and what their Committee has been doing up until now. She provided some background information on the members of the Charter Review Committee. Afterwards, Ms. Hyde presented Select Board Warrant Article #5-12. Members asked questions after each warrant article.

Select Board #5- Some members expressed concern about the proposed change as it may impact the voting on bigger warrant articles.

Select Board #6 – There will be updated language that the Town Clerk will be appointed by the Town Administrator in consultation with the Select Board. Members asked what the Charter committee means by “in consultation with”. Town Council commented that expression appears for appointing the Finance Director.

Select Board # 7- The proposed article language changed allowing up to 15 appointed members for FinCom. Chairperson Hertz commented that he had a productive discussion with the Charter Review Committee at their recent public hearing. He believes that a 15 member FinCom brings a tremendous amount of diverse opinion and thinking to FinCom deliberations. He felt the proposed new language in the article is an excellent decision that gives the Town Moderator flexibility to appointing FinCom members while maintaining a broad membership for the Commission. One member commented that being a part of the Commission has been an amazing experience where you get to learn about how the town works, to hear the business of the town, and you can also give your opinion which may differ from others. He encouraged any town resident who is interested to sign up to be a FinCom members. Later on, he asked if the Charter Review Committee could amend the Commission's quorum to seven if fifteen members are appointed.

Ms. Hyde stated the final set of the revised Charter will be provided to the Commission before the Final Public Hearing.

The Chair thanked the Charter Review Committee and Attorney Ms. Goldberg for their time and hard work. He also asked if a member of the Committee can stay behind to answer any public questions.

- Nora Loughnane [Director of Community and Economic Development], Elijah Romulus [Town Planner], Ellen Larkin Rollings [Planning Board Chair], Members of the Planning Board, and Amanda Wolfe [Housing and Land Use Planner]- 2024 ATM "Planning Board" Warrant Articles #1-6

The Chair introduced the evening's final presentation. Ms. Nora Loughnane [Director of Community and Economic Development], Mr. Elijah Romulus [Town Planner], Ms. Ellen Larkin Rollings [Planning Board Chair], Members of the Planning Board, and Ms. Amanda Wolfe [Housing and Land Use Planner] were present. Ms. Rollings called the Planning Board's meeting to order at 8:45PM. Ms. Loughnane presented Planning Board Article #1-6. Article #7 (Housekeeping) was voted to be removed at last night's Select Board meeting. Members asked questions after each warrant article. Planning Board # 1- Ms. Loughnane went over the MBTA Communities Law and gave a brief history on how the MUMFROD district was established. Then she showed where the current MUMFROD's districts are in Westwood and how Westwood's current zoning complies with the MBTA Community Law but additional work is needed to comply with the Guidelines interpreting the law issued by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. Ms. Rollings presented the Planning Board's process for addressing those Guidelines. Lastly, Ms. Loughnane provided illustrations of where the proposed new MUMFROD districts would be and stated what the requirements are in all the MUMFROD subdistricts.

One member expressed her concern about in the influx of potential students and the town's ability to properly educate given the space constraints at a lot of the schools.

Planning Board # 2- Ms. Loughnane showed illustrations where the proposed amendments to improve wireless/emergency communications are located.

Planning Board # 3- Building Commissioner asked to revise the following definitions in the ByLaw: Building height, lot width, rear yard, detached accessory structure, retaining wall height, combined wall and fence height, and affordable housing/affordable dwelling units.

Planning Board # 4- The proposed article is to remove specific parcel numbers and address references and place it with zoning map references.

Planning Board # 5- The proposed article is to add the word 'gross' in front of the word, floor in Section 8.5 Accessory Apartment.

Planning Board # 6- The proposed article is to make sure the same environmental concerns that the Planning Board had with commercial dumpsters throughout town are the same even if it is a temporary construction dumpster.

Vice Chair Poreda suggested that the Planning Board warrant article language provide as many diagrams, examples and illustrations as needed in the Annual Town Meeting book.

The Planning Board will continue their Public Hearing on March 12, 2024 via Zoom. Zoom details are provided on the town website. The Chair thanked Ms. Loughnane and the Planning Board for their excellent and thorough presentation.

Ms. Rollings asked if there were any questions from the Public.

One resident asked if there is any guidance as to what “suitable” means in the MBTA Communities Law. Ms. Loughnane stated that least 10% of the overall units have to have three bedrooms but the remaining can have two or one bedrooms or a studio. The resident also asked if the slides are available online. Ms. Loughnane stated the slides are available in the Planning Board meeting packet including the specific language of every article.

The Planning Board adjourned their meeting at 9:55PM.

Chair’s update:

Chairperson Hertz mentioned the Commission’s subcommittees will be presenting at the March 12th meeting. He then asked members for a consensus on if they prefer the meeting to be in person or on Zoom. All members were in favor for in person. The Chair also mentioned that members will need to do article write ups for the Annual Town Meeting book which is different from the subcommittee reports & presentation slides. Members can use the previous year’s book as reference for doing their write ups.

One member commented about the title of the warrant articles. Vice Chair Poreda stated the Commission doesn’t control how the title is and members are only responsible for doing the write ups.

Old Business:

Members were asked to review and approve the meeting minutes for February 12, 2024. A motion was offered and seconded. Twelve members raised their hands in favor of approving the minutes. Two members were absent.

Public and the Press:

The Chair asked if there were any questions from the Public and the Press:

- First resident was in favor of original proposed dog leash law which has been removed. He felt the Town has missed an opportunity to significantly improve public safety. In addition, he thought the current regulations are very confusing and needs to be clarified. He suggested that the original proposed dog leash rule be consistent with surrounding communities and state rules. The resident felt the Town needs to be more forward thinking. Lastly, he encouraged the Town, the Commission and Selectmen to adopt more current types of policies relating to dogs and leashes. The Chair thanked the resident for his comments.
- Second resident made a comment on the confusion of interpretation related to the proposed changes of Select Board Article #4. She also spoke on behalf of the Westwood Land Trust that they should come forward to share any details with the Commission if an article were to come up for Hale Education. Then she commented on the Charter Review Committee's presentation related to the following topics: quorum and open town meeting. The resident believes the Town needs quality people to fill the appointed positions such as the Town Clerk. She thanked the Commission for their hard work. Chairperson Hertz invited the resident to attend the Final Public Hearing and provide any input if there may be a warrant article on Hale Education. He encouraged Town residents to participate in the Commission's Public Hearing.
- Third resident commented on the Home petition warrant article for the Housing Authority. She asked what does it means to be a member that appointed and elected. Town Council Pat Ahearn stated there is a provision in state law where one member of the Housing Authority may be appointed by the Governor, but the rest are elected. He also commented that the Governor has rarely appointed a person to a town's Housing Authority and never in Westwood.

Chairperson Hertz thanked the members of the Select Board, Planning Board, Charter Review Committee and Town Council who stayed behind to answer Town resident's questions.

The Chair thanked members for attending and asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion was offered and seconded. Those who were present all raised their hands in favor of adjourning the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:04PM

For a complete video of the 02/27/24 FinCom Public Hearing please see the following link:
<https://westwoodmediacenter.tv/>