

Social Service PILOT and Comparative Impact Study Committee
Public Hearing Room Memorial Building Framingham, Ma
Approved Minutes
August 2, 2005

Attendance: Bob Berman, Yaakov Cohn, Kurt Steinberg, Dawn Harkness, Laurie Lee, Jim Palmer, Nick Sanchez, Cynthia Laurora., Steve Orr, Wes Ritchie, Ed Noonan

The Town Moderator called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM and reviewed his role to facilitate the election of officers and clarify the mission of the committee as directed by Town Meeting. The motion under Article 19 has two parts. The first provides \$1,000 to the Selectman/Town Manager to fund research and institute a PILOT program for non profit social services. The second charges our group to do a comparative impact study of Social Services in Framingham inclusive of monetary and environmental impacts including fire, police and schools. Town Meeting also asks the town manager and Board of Selectman to report back the findings and a suggested PILOT program at the Next Town Meeting. This means to the Moderator that our group, through the chair, shall make periodic reports of our findings to the Selectman so they can in turn report to Town Meeting. A report of some kind, even interim report, should be given at the Fall Town Meeting. The scope of this research is up to us. We have wide range and no restrictions on our study.

Review of Meeting Procedures such as Open Meeting Laws, communication and minutes.

Dawn: I need to add one other thing, I'm sorry, but in the interests of disclosure, I also, in addition to be a practicing attorney, work for SMOC on the weekends at a women's shelter. So I am ..

Steve: She alleges.

Dawn: Excuse me?

Steve: She alleges.

Dawn: I allege, right. I'm there.

Steve: No One knows for sure (laughs)

Dawn: Believe me. They know me. (Something unintelligible)

Election of Officers

Chair Nominations:

By Steve Orr – Bob Berman

2nd Dawn Harkness

By Wes Ritchie- Yaakov Cohn

2nd Nick Sanchez

Palmer- Close Motion
Votes: **Berman 7**
Cohn 3

2nd Nick Sanchez Pass 10-0-0

Vice-Chair Nominations

By Laurie Lee- **Yaakov Cohn**
Elected by acclamation

2nd Dawn Harkness

Clerk Nominations

By Yaakov Cohn- **Laurie Lee**
Elected by Acclamation

2nd Steve Orr

Mr. Giombetti congratulates group and thanks all members for their service to the town. This is a vital group to the town and one being looked at closely by other towns. We are pioneers and will offer a template for others to follow. Please let the selectman know what we can do to help.

Chair Bob Berman takes lead of Committee. Procedures will follow Roberts Rules of Order. Vote to accept this was 10-0-0

Chair's vision for the committee is one of inclusion. Every member of the committee has as much right to set the agenda and being part of pushing the group forward. If there is an issue or item anyone wants on the agenda, please tell the chair. We are a team and we will work together towards our goal.

What will our future agenda look like?

How do we find the information we are looking for?

We will be looking for Social Service activities in our and other communities. Where can we find the data that we are looking for? We should go around the room and get some preliminary thoughts on this.

Palmer: There is information out there and studies done that we can access. There are cities and towns like Boston and Worcester implementing PILOT's and we should look at them. How has the town changed over the years? What is the role of social services in town today?

Sanchez: Consider the Mission statement of our group: A comparative impact study inclusive of fire, police, schools and safety (Is that redundant?) we should invite the chief of the Fire, Police and Superintendent of schools for their perspectives.

Orr: I did some preliminary work getting some statistical information together from both the fire and police department and I learned that we need to be very specific about what we want them to provide us regarding information. We need to ask them to compile the total number of calls to each address we are interested in and the cost associated with each calls .We can go to them and ask them directly or invite them in for a discussion and come up with a list of what we need and have them assign the task.

Laurora: Our role is to do an in depth study of all the impacts on the town due to social services and we should break it down into categories: Schools, fire, police. We need to do a comprehensive study to determine the costs and the justification for a pilot. We need clear cut information and data before we go ask for PILOT's. We need to be as comprehensive as possible and take as much time as we need.

Cohn: We have an awful lot of preliminary work to do. We need to start with our physical structure of the table layout. We need to arrange the tables to foster discussions. Discuss what the Comparative impact study means. Should we be looking beyond ss's and at other non profits? How many sites are we talking about? We should not limit our work to just fire police and schools. What about how our property values are affected. Our State Rep Debby Blumer is worried about us overlooking the benefits these services bring to the town. How many people are making a living working for SS's? What are all the economic impacts

Harkness: Mr Cohn actually touched on a point that I wanted to make sure that we cover as well. I don't think we can just look at costs without looking at benefits. And I think there are many costs that are offset by benefits, For example, when some alarms go off that are logged by the fire department and police department, SMOC pays for those. And as Chief Carl mentioned to me and in front of Mr Orr, that actually they make money from the alarms that they respond to on SMOC properties. So I think that whatever we do we cannot only look at the minus column, we need to look at the plus column as well. And some of that will be intangible like 500 people alone employed by SMOC. How many people are able to stay in their homes because SMOC delivers Meals on Wheels. That might be the one hot meal that person gets, and their family may not feel comfortable leaving them there and they might have to go to a nursing home? And there are some other issues. There are some intangibles (Unintelligible) that SMOC provides to this community. And I will insist that we include that in this report. Also, SMOC pays taxes on some of those properties. (Unintelligible background noise) I hope that sort of thing will be taken into consideration . (Unintelligible background noise)

(Unintelligible) I realize that we are charged with looking at social service agencies, but from the background material we have been provided, we have already been given a heads up that a pilot program which targets social services may not be legally binding. And personally I can't understand why social service agencies would agree to comply with a PILOT program when they are the only ones asked to comply where when other social service agencies, I mean other tax exempt properties are not and still use services. And so I think we are at some point, we are going to have to grapple with that issue unless we intend to buy ourselves a large lawsuit at the end of this PILOT program if we only continue to targets social services. I made a motion on the floor of Town Meeting that we have a very broad study, and I have a feeling we'll have to revisit my motion again because I think that focusing on social services may be illegal.

Ritchie: We have to define for ourselves what a social service agency is. We need to lay the basic groundwork before we can even begin o know what we need to be asking.

Berman: So far we have talked about things in Framingham . When I read Comparative Impact, I think how do we compare to other communities in MA. That will be the toughest part of what we do. We are the first people to do this as Mr. Giombetti said. How do we get the info about other communities? Maybe we can get our State Rep's and Senator's to give us guidance .

Lee: I think it is important to be clear that we are actually being charged with two separate, yet connected, issues. The directive from Town Meeting assigns the task of creating and implementing a PILOT program to the Town Manager/Selectman . The charge to the ad hoc group is to do the comparative Impact study. However, the Selectman assigned the task to our group of researching the PILOT program as well. When Mr. Noonan discussed the reporting to town meeting of the findings of our study, he interpreted that the Selectman shall report the pilot issue. I would like to ask that the findings of the comparative study, be given to town meeting by the chair of this group. I would also like to stress that we create standards for our collection of information such that it is verifiable and documented, and any person who wishes to check out the source, has that ability.

Mr. Noonan: Mr. Petrini made an example of how Boston does their PILOT program and that might prove useful.

Laurora: We should also know who are the recipients of the services in Framingham. Are they regional, from across the State, out of State or local to Framingham.

Harkness: These records might be private.

Cohn: Does DYS and other State agencies focus on Framingham for locating services? Is this type of concentration accelerating? We need to prove or disprove this.

Sanchez: We need to compare Framingham to other communities to know how we stand. How do we compare in terms of how many and what kinds of services we have and who are we serving compared to other communities.

Palmer: 52% of property in Boston not taxed and they have a PILOT program and we need to find out what they are doing and how it is working,. What % of our property is non taxed? What is the effect of this?

Steinberg: We should find out what State agencies have done studies and what information we could get from them. We could get someone from HHS for example to speak with us. We need to know how many non profits and ss's we have in Framingham. They should have a voice in the process too. They should come in and testify so we have both sides. If we are asking them to pay we need their point of view.

Orr; Let's remember that our task is not to collect money from anyone. We need to figure out what our costs are .

Berman: There is confusion on that. The Selectman charge us to research the PILOT programs and that could include how are they implemented. We need to be thorough and find some working models that could be implemented by the selectman.

Lee: In regards to the PILOT program, Newton has just begun the process of implementing a PILOT and Alderman Parker, who spearheaded the effort, has offered to come and talk to our group. I have Newton's report. (This will go out on email for the group to read)

Scheduling

Meetings will be held every week on Tuesday evenings at 7:30 PM. We will try to reserve the Public Hearing Room.

Minutes will be drafted weekly and used as a review of the previous session.

We will try to make these available on the Town Website.

We will also ask to have our agenda for the upcoming meeting posted on the calendar section of the town website.

Motion to adjourn. 10 in favor 0 -0