

Policy Advisory Committee  
Freedom Hall  
October 10, 2018 at 5:30 p.m.

Called to order

Present: Fran Parks, Adam Zais, Amy Kates, Jacqueline Maestro,

Purpose of the Policy Advisory Committee it should be a standing committee that shall make informal recommendations to elected boards and committees of the Cotuit Fire District such recommendations may concern but are not limited to efficiencies in the operations of various departments coordination of financial planning between the various departments including the timing of capital expenditures. The policy advisory committee may also research and evaluate any potential action which might improve quality of service provided by the Cotuit Fire District's residents The committee shall be composed of one member of the Prudential Committee, a member of the Board of Fire Commissioners, one member of the Board of Water Commissioners, and two members at large shall be appointed by the moderator on an annual basis Such appointments are to be named each year by the time of the annual meeting or subsequent to the annual meeting if no district citizens volunteers before said meeting. Until the first meeting of each year, the prudential committee member shall serve as the chairman, upon the convening of the committee a chairman shall be elected by the members of the committee. PAC shall be advisory in nature only; the committee shall conduct meetings at least once a year.

Elect Chairman: Fran asked if anyone else volunteered to be chairman, if not she would be glad to volunteer. Adam nominated Fran Parks as the chairperson for the PAC, seconded, all in favor.

Suggestions for Policies to Review: Amy discussed concerns she had about the minimum standards of the Mass Law that was adopted at the last annual meeting, feels The law was adopted by the tax payers of Cotuit at the May annual meeting, and Amy thinks the tax payers would expect this committee to follow the law, but the water department and the non-union employees of the fire department are not being held to the minimum standards that were voted on. The law states we can give more benefits than the minimum, but the goal is to save the district money, so Amy thinks the residents didn't really approve offering benefits above the law minimum. Amy was thinking if were not going to follow the law, then why did we adopt it. Amy's other thought was when do we hold elected officials accountable for following By-laws. Amy continued with concerns about who is on the committees, Fran interceded stating this meeting is not to talk about who is on the committee but to talk about the policies of the fire district. Ken Malloy put an advertisement in the Cotuit Currents asking for volunteers and Fran gave him two names. Regarding Mass Law, Amy feels there are two entities in Cotuit that are not getting the minimum of the Mass law-both Fran and Adam corrected Amy that her information was incorrect. Adam said the Mass law is more generous, and when Amy spoke about wanting to save money-we would not be saving the taxpayers money by following the law in that particular case, if were to follow the law there are more packages more generous than the benefits that Chris is currently being employed under. Following the law would raise the cost to the tax payers, which is Adams best recollection at this point about Chris' current benefits. Amy switched gears to discuss the Chiefs benefits. Fran said one of the most important things about the earned time law is it makes accommodations for employees to use their sick time to care for children, elderly parents-that is written in the law. In this state that law applies to all Massachusetts employees (except Municipal employees), at the annual meeting it was voted yes to have the law. Fran doesn't see anyone abusing it and doesn't

see how this is of any financial deficit, plus doesn't know of anyone who is not doing their job. Chris' portfolio of work has evolved to include far more value to the town than we initially envisioned upon hiring her. Could take a debate that one way she is underpaid to the work she divides especially considering the surrounding towns. Adam said if want to address benefits that is fine, he will have the information needed then can talk about it from a policy perspective. A water department representative is not in attendance tonight so not able to discuss their benefits, which are in the process of being revamped. Amy agreed that don't have the Chief, Chris, or the water departments benefits to compare them to the Mass Law. Adam said he feels the law was passed so as not to be discriminatory and in Adams opinion it was not coming from that there is something wrong in the district as it seems to be from where Cindy and Amy are coming from. Amy thanked Adam for his comments, she wasn't eluding to the fact that our employees are not good employees-Amy wants to be sure that we are not offering benefits in excess that the taxpayer think we passed last May and for this committee to look at it, discuss it, and nail down what we are offering. Jacqueline said she sees it that if you hired a Fire Chief to be in charge, that is his domain, the water district supervisor, that is his domain and if you have the faith in them as supervisors, then she feels they would have a handle on this especially after the annual meeting voted the Mass Law as a policy and not sure why it has anything to do with this committee. Amy said it is up to the Prudential committee and they are the financial committee of the district and they have fiduciary obligation of managing taxes that are raised and expended; this committee is an advisory committee so our task is to look at policies in the district and to review ,discuss, understand and to make a recommendation to the Prudential Committee if we see they are out of line with what was voted by the tax payers and then this committee makes a report to the Prudential Committee. Adam spoke and said Amy had a couple contrasting thoughts, one article your referring to is to be sure not to offer something to people that was not being offered, then the second is the budget of all the different operating elements. Those budgets that pay for certain employees especially at the water department (which is all non-union), plus 2 non-union at the fire department, so those budgets were voted on as well. Amy feels the tax payers don't know what those benefits are and they approved the Mass state law for benefits-Adam and Fran disagree, Jacqueline stated they were shown the numbers and said they were alright. Fran said no one discussed going back to a minimum, the FF contract got them on a medium par with the rest of the FF on Cape Cod, regarding the Chiefs contract, can't offer the minimum what they pay Chiefs and expect someone that is competent to do the job. We paid the going rate maybe even a little less

Fran discussed a notice in the paper from the COMM water department regarding final demand notices that were sent out and if not paid water would be shut off. As far as Fran knows, demand notices don't get sent out in our district-the water department puts a lien on the home if the resident hasn't paid the water bill for over a year, which is a cumbersome policy-problem with that is we don't necessarily get that money back in a timely fashion from the town collector-we are not even sure how much money is in the rears at the town collectors office. Water dept doesn't have a policy to turn off water so there is no incentive for anyone to pay the water bill. Fran would like to look at this and discuss, but need Don here for that. Adam agrees it is worth discussing. Fran said there is a Mass Law that governs being able to turn off water, when, and how. Amy mentioned that at the water meeting it was discussed how many residents would be getting those letters, asked if know how many didn't pay, Fran answered we don't know. Fran said she has discussed with the Chairman of the water commissioners about developing a policy for low income households. Adam asked if a motion had to be made, Fran would like to have another meeting in January to discuss, Jacqueline asked what to do about the water situation, Fran will talk with Tom, Amy asked if another meeting could be scheduled earlier than January to discuss water and employee benefits-Adam offered to speak with Amy about the fire department

benefits person to person anytime, and doesn't feel right now is a good time for standardizing and everything has to be judged on its own merits. Both Adam and Fran don't feel a rush to have a meeting and ok to wait until next year. Amy would like this committee to let the Prudential committee know what is being offered and in what situations it is in excess of the law that we passed-correction by Adam, we didn't pass a law all we said was to adopt the Massachusetts Law, Amy stated that last year Prudential was in the process of putting together a benefits package that would make sense for the district, and then it was decided to adopt the Mass State Law. Adam said the benefits package decided at the town meeting are set aside from the Mass law and feels Amy is confusing the two issues one is not related to another, it means that anyone that is hired as "at least that" from Mass Law. Amy agrees it is the least amount of benefits, but if offering more she would like to know what that is and feels this committee is a perfect committee to take a look at this and analyze it and provide a report to the Prudential Committee. Fran stated that employees are offered standard benefits (vacation, insurance if needed, etc) to individuals employed anywhere. Adam said it feels to him like there is no way to address Amy's feelings that something is being abused, Amy said she feels Adam is assuming something when she just wants the facts, and how much over the minimum are we and does the Prudential Committee know, water is not even here to tonight so can't show us their handbook. Jacqueline stated if the Cotuit residents voted on the dollar amount that the Fire and Water Commissioners deemed appropriate what difference does it make? Fran mentioned that Amy could have asked these questions at candidates' night when Ray reviewed the budget, could have asked these questions at the annual meeting, or at any fire commissioners meeting (said by Adam). He will have the information available for Amy at the next meeting-It is standard that everyone gets two weeks. Amy feels the ability to accumulate sick leave is the issue and the ability to buy back at retirement. She would like to see what that is, as hasn't seen the handbook from water and doesn't know what is going on with the non-union employees at fire, would like to get that information and talk about it at this committee and have a summary for the Prudential committee about what is being offered district wide. Amy confirmed that the union's sick day were capped (agreed by Fran) Amy would just like to see a summary about how those benefits stand up against the state law. Jacqueline asked if the issue is, we are not being fair to our employees or are we being more than fair? Amy said she is a person who likes information, it is not emotional. Adam said it is great she wants the information, but that is not the subject of the policy-Amy said that would be the recommendation to Prudential. Adam said the information is there for Amy to get, but Adam is not going to revise history downward because he is very happy with the employees we currently have. Amy stated this committee was researching a benefits package last year and just as we were getting to the point of making recommendations, the Prudential Committee decided to adopt the Mass law -Fran disagreed. Prior to Amy's report Fran has been pushing to adopt the Mass Law. Fran suggested to Amy if she would like to know the benefits given to the water department ask Jennifer, she would be glad to provide the information. Adam said he would get you the benefits of the fire department non-union employees, finance employees don't get any benefits above being able to accumulate sick time because that is the law that we adopted and workman's comp because they are part time. Elected officials don't have benefits beside the stipend. Amy asked how many hours Assistant Treasurer worked (24 hours)-Amy said she is able to get sick time because she is over 20? Fran stated the law is anyone who works over 1 hour is eligible for sick time. Amy concluded that she guesses we are in the process of what to look at-at the next meeting and she would like to put benefits on the table, and that Fran would like to put water payers that are in rears and that she is good with that. Fran feels discussing the benefits is not productive-union contract, employee benefits, salaries, overtime are public information and may be obtained by any resident and doesn't see what the point is of accumulating all of that, to decide what, plan on eliminating raises in the future? Amy asked that as Chairman of the Prudential committee that is Fran saying she wouldn't welcome to have that information to share with fellow Prudential committee members? Adam stated it is an interesting

point-what we need to do is try and separate something Amy is interested in from what should the Policy Advisory Committee be recommending as a policy. Adam said if Amy would like to make a recommendation that the town follow a policy of "something" to have this committee look into a policy rather than having an open ended discussion about benefits-it would be more productive for Adam and Amy to discuss the gap of benefits between the Law and the Chief and Chris' benefits he will discuss that now, it shouldn't be part of the agenda, unless Amy is stated she would like to create a policy that all employees have only the minimum of benefits in terms of sick time accrual as stipulated by the Mass law which was adopted at the town meeting-that is a very different thing, which Adam would not be in favor of. At first Jacqueline thought Amy was saying we are overpaying people but at the same time from her own understanding of the PAC it is not up to this committee to do that, it is up to the water and fire depts. Amy said that is why there is a member from each committee to discuss the policies in the district, look at and study them, be informed about them—Jacquelin asked if a policy was already in place within the different departments? Amy would like to know what it is. Adam said it is a valid question, but it is not a policy, nor something that would be recommended. Adam stated again the best way for Amy to get what she wants is to ask Don or Jen for water information, and himself for fire, but we are not talking about policy-we are talking about information Amy is looking to have; which she has every right to have. The recommendation in terms of this meeting that we actually want to have a discussion about creating a policy-Fran has brought up a subject for a change in policy. Amy agreed and said this committee can have an advising role presenting a summarized form to the Prudential Committee the departments in Cotuit are doing-Adam interjected that the advice could be simple, need to have a policy about this as it is not necessarily up to us to come up with a policy it is our recommendation that there should be a policy. Amy stated she is just talking about summarizing it, she doesn't even know if this committee is going to make a recommendation one way or the other unless we actually look at it and we say "oh my God is that what we are offering". Adam said that is why he believes it was decided that for the next meeting the subject we are going to talk about is we have to bring information from the water department to the next meeting, review it and want to change that. It was agreed the next meeting would be after the new year.

Motion made to adjourn, seconded, all in favor