COTUIT FIRE DISTRICT
PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE MEETING
ZOOM only
COTUIT, MA 02635
April 21, 2025

The meeting was called to order by Mark Lynch on April 21, 2025, @6:00pm via ZOOM.

Mark led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mark did roll call:
Prudential Committee members: Mark Lynch, Fran Parks, Seth Burdick, Treasurer Ray Pirrone and Clerk Charlie Eager all via ZOOM.

<u>Public Comment</u>

- Karl Vasilhoff, 89 Narrow's Way. Mr. Vasilhoff stated that he is the VP of Cotuit Library Board, and he spoke about the importance of funding this year from the Fire District to $50,000.00, which is memorialized in Autumn Hassett's 04.18.2025, letter to the Prudential Committee
    - Funding – Mr. Vasilhoff stated that there is great uncertainty at Town, State and Federal level and, at the Federal level, the libraries are under attack
        - Facing increasing costs:
            - Employee
            - Health care
            - Circulation and acquisition of electronic materials
            - Caring for historic Library building
    - Library is experiencing record patron visits
        - Programming for both adults and children has increased, amongst others
    - Mr. Vasilhoff reminded the Board Members that this is not a public library, although it is open to the public. It is a 5013C non-profit so largely dependent on outside sources for funding.
- Patty Daley asked the Committee when the results of the school study will be published (where and when).
    - Mark answered that the cost data has still not come in but is expected some time within the next few days. Mark stated that ICON is very much aware of the timeline. Mark also stated that there will be a PowerPoint presentation in advance of the April 25, 2025, meeting.
- Ms. Daley asked if the Warrant was going to be open up to 30 days ahead of ADM (April 29, 2025) and will the clerk be available to accept a Petition Article.
    - Mark answered that it is a requirement and Fran answered that it is in the by-laws.
- Ms. Daley asked the Committee to postpone any demolition vote for several months so the residents of the district can review the results and discuss the study results.
    - Fran stated that she is not interested in being delayed any longer as the public has had four (4) years and there has already been a meeting. Maintaining the school is a burden on the taxpayers (electricity, security, insurance, etc.). Fran went on and stated that if those that want to turn the building into a Community Center are not ready to present their proposal at this point, it is not fair to make everyone else wait.

<u>Review of Articles in Proposed Warrant</u>

- (Lisa Haven shared the draft *"Cotuit Fire District Annual Election and District Meeting 27 and 28 2025"*)
- Mark asked Ray and Charlie who is responsible for editing the document.
    - Ray answered that he believed Charlie should be responsible as Clerk.
- The Committee members reviewed the draft and commented on changes that needed to be made
- <u>Article 1</u>: To see if the District will vote to accept the reports of the officers and committees of the District as printed.
    - Fran asked if a vote should take place in the Annual Report from FY23 and FY24.
    - Mark answered yes.

- <u>Article 2</u>: Funding of the Firehouse Construction and Renovation
    - Mark commented that the sum of $16,762,230.00 in the Article is not what he had, which was closer to $17,900,000.00 and asked if the $1.3M has already been voted on.
        - Kevin Conley, Chairman of Cotuit Fire Department Board of Commissioners commented that the $16,762,230.00 is what the anticipated construction cost to be and the $1.3M is a separate expense that has already been approved.
    - Mark commented that the language is vague re: "borrow" vs. "raise and appropriate."
        - Ray answered it is traditionally worded that way. Historically, the warrant has been done independent from the script.
            - Mark asked Ray what he meant by "script" and Ray explained, which Charlie and Fran weighing in.
            - Mark asked Ray when the script would be ready and Ray answered by the end of the week along with the last draft of the budget.
            - Fran asked if another meeting can be held on the 28th to go over the script and Charlie answered yes.
            - Ray stated that the meeting can be held again but need not be held on the 28th.

- <u>Article 3</u>: School Building Structure
    - Mark asked about the $1,100,000.00 (and the language surrounding it regarding "raise and appropriate and/or transfer and appropriate"
        - Ray stated that anything can be worded differently up to the date of publication. He also stated that the Warrant can be approved now pending the final number from Article 3
    - Seth stated that the language could include approval can be "up to" and avoid supplemental appropriations.
    - Mark stated that he and Ray would meet on Monday, 04.28.2025, and would have seen the ICON number and, if needed, the money language in the script could change.
    - Mark asked Lisa Haven to post the meeting on the Cotuit Fire District website. Lisa asked if it was the "School Only" meeting (as stated on the agenda). Mark answered that it was.
    - Mark asked Lisa to post in Word format. Lisa answered that she would as well as put in the hyperlink. Additionally, Lisa stated that she would work with the individual who, in the past, was not able to access the link.

        - Fran expressed her concern with someone changing a Word formatted document. Mark answered that, if one wanted to sabotage the document, they could also do so in PDF format.

- Article 4: Salaries
    - No comments

- Article 5: Reserve Fund
    - Fran recommends keeping it at $45,000.00

- Article 6: District's Finance Department labor and salaries and Prudential Committee remaining expenses
    - Mark made a comment about laying out what the $322,000.00 expenses were because last year, there were some probing comments made about this $$
    - Ray stated that the budget, which has been printed and made available at the meeting, is for things like general insurance, payroll taxes, cost of borrowing, payments to the Town for collection of taxes, setting tax breaks, cost of election, cost of district meetings, etc.

- Article 7: District Fire Dept labor and salaries and expenses for Fire Department
    - Ray stated that the $4,500.00 was a "miscellaneous expense"
    - Chief Sean Brown stated that the numbers represented were accurate

- Article 8: District's Water Department labor and salaries and expenses for Water Department
    - No comment

- Article 9: Superintendent's truck for Water Department
    - No comment

- Article 10: Cybersecurity for Water Department
    - No comment

- Article 11: Water Department HVAC System
    - No comment

- Article 12: Water Department office printer and copier expenses
    - Ray stated that any excess would go to operations
    - Fran asked if a printer/copier was recently replaced.
        - Ray stated that he would have to research that.

- Article 13: Labor and salaries for Freedom Hall maintenance and expenses
    - Fran asked if this covered landscaping and snowplowing.
        - Ray stated that it did

- Article 14: Streetlights
    - Fran stated that the streetlights are starting to get to the end of their life

- Article 15: Cotuit Library maintenance
    - Mark stated that he is married to Kathleen O'Neil Lynch who is on the Board of Trustees at the Cotuit Library. He also stated that he looked into the Conflict-of-Interest Laws and this may present an appearance of a conflict. He moved to abstain from this, after pointing out there was a request for $50,000.00
    - Fran stated that the increase in cost was a lot for taxpayers and she would not vote to raise this to $50,000.00
    - Seth stated that he was on the board for the Library for 6 years and appreciated and understood, however, there is an escalating taxation situation in the Village and in the Town. Seth suggested going up and making it an even $35,000.00
        - Fran asked Ray how much it was increased
            - Ray answered it increased 3%

- Article 16: Payment of Principal and Interest
    - Mark asked Ray if he would list how this is divided between Fire / Water / Prudential
        - Ray answered he would have the division before Mark's next meeting on Friday.

- Article 17: Paying employee current and post-employment benefits
    - Mark asked Ray if he would list how this is divided between Fire / Water / Prudential
        - Ray answered he would have the division before Mark's next meeting on Friday.
    - Mark stated that he thought these numbers should be included in the related to Fire / Water / Prudential and asked if there was any reason that it was pulled out.
        - Ray answered it was better for management in order to measure the performance against the budget and easier to manage.

- Article 18: Stabilization Fund
    - Ray stated that there is no change from last year
    - No further comment

- Article 19: Water Department Stabilization Fund
    - No comment

- Mark stated that Charlie will make the edits that were discussed and then distribute to all Board members. If changes are as recorded, then the Board approves the Warrant subject to Article 3 relating to the school, in particular with regard to the number that the ICON will have.
    - Fran asked Mark if, by next Friday, there should be a better idea regarding the $$ for the school.
        - Mark answered yes.
- Mark stated that the verbiage, "Return the Site to Grass" should be "Return the Site to Nature."
- Fran made a recommendation for a change in the By-Laws:
    - Article 6 Section 2 should be changed from "end of calendar year" to "when Clerk can deem an appropriate time".
        - Mark asked if the By-Law Committee needs to be involved for a vote
            - Fran said no, the Prudential Committee can author a By-Law change
                - Mark suggested that any changes should be deferred to the By-Law Committee but asked Charlie

    - Fran asked Charlie if it is necessary for the By-Law Committee to meet or can the Prudential Committee offer up By-Law changes?
    - Charlie answered that Prudential Committee can make recommendations for changes to the By-Laws.
        - Mark asked if that required 2/3 of the vote at the ADM
            - Charlie answered that was correct
        - Mark asked if this was what they wanted to do, then an Article would need to be created
            - Charlie answered that was correct
        - Seth asked what the likelihood that the Committee would meet prior to the closing of the Warrant?
            - Mark answered that the Warrant closes 7-days from April 21, 2025.
            - Mark stated that it would be better to push the meeting to another date, not to take away from the value of the proposed change because, as it is written, it requires people to get their documents in before it exists.
            - Fran asked Charlie when he would like the reports to be submitted.
                - Charlie stated at the beginning of April.
                    - Fran questioned that timeline
                - Charlie stated that ideally, it would be the beginning of March.
            - Fran suggested replacing Section 2 with, "by the end of March next fiscal year"

    - **Fran made a Motion to revise Article 6 of the By-Laws, Section 2 from, "The Clerk shall publish all Annual Reports of the District by the end of the Calendar Year" and instead say, "…by March 1 of the next fiscal year". Seth Seconded the Motion. All in Favor.**

- Mark stated that a concerned citizen did some investigating regarding the sound in Freedom Hall and did some research. The price tag was $22,000.00. ($11,000 for Audio and $11,000 for Visual). Mark stated that an Article could be added to the Warrant.
    - Fran stated that the problem is not the equipment. The problem is the building and the height of the ceiling and needs to have baffling. It is an 1860s building.
    - Seth stated that it is not unreasonable and there is an obvious solution, which is ZOOM meetings.
        - Fran stated that if an all-ZOOM meeting means no more in-person meetings. You can either do one or the other, and not do both.
    - Mark stated that the ADM and SDM need to be in person for voting purposes.
    - Mark stated that the OWL works well as long as the person is sitting right in front of it and more often times than not, audience members do not sit right at the table. The Board Members need to make sure that they remind the audience to walk up to the OWL.
        - Not enough votes to put this on the Warrant

Approval of Past Meeting Minutes

- April 8, 2025 - Prudential Meeting Minutes
    - **Mark asked for a motion to approve and moved**
        - **Seth seconded**
            - **All in favor**

Assistant Treasurer position

- Ray suggested that the duties be combined (that were identified) and try to hire a single FT person
    - Set stated that sounded fine as long as that is what Ray thinks would work best
- Fran stated that she would continue to stay on for Freedom Hall
    - Mark stated that job that Fran is doing is not only appreciated but may also need to be included in the job description
- Ray stated that the next step would be to post on Indeed
    - Lisa asked about the legal advertisement
        - Ray stated that he had spoken to Warren Rutherford regarding same
            - Mark asked Ray to send the Committee the final Indeed ad along with salary range.
    - Seth asked Ray if the funding for this position is in the budget
        - Ray answered that it is reflected in the budget.

By-Laws Committee

- No new meeting

Policy Advisory Committee

- No new meeting

Annual District Meeting

- Cotuit Federated Church has agreed to host the ADM and there may be a significant crowd. Mark thanked them for their support.
    - Fran stated that there needs to be a better way to sign people in.
        - Mark stated that he and Jack Gardner have spoken about this issue, especially signing people in.
        - Fran stated that the Town has people put their license in for clarification purposes
            - Mark stated that he did not have an objection to that
            - Seth asked if Prudential Committee would need to ask the Clerk if they could hire the volunteers and use the machine they use
                - Fran stated probably.
            - Mark asked for the publicity materials to help people get to the meeting early
            - Mark asked if the sandwich board (including the Civic Association) could be used to advertise Friday's meeting
                - Lisa stated that ICON hosts the meeting
- Mark stated that he will follow up with music related hiring

BAN (Bond Amortization Note)

- Ray stated that one of the components of the BAN from June 6th, one of the components is the design phase of the Fire Station is $1.3M
    - Anything over $500,000.00 requires Bond Counsel Approval
- Prudential Committee rec'd from BAN Counsel a letter itemizing the requirements
    - Ray and Charlie have been gathering the supporting documentation
    - Deadline is May 5, 2025; to fulfill the requirement to give the documents to Town Counsel so she can review and issue her opinion.
- BAN being proposed is $1,968,650.00
- Issue locating 2022 advertisement and proof of publication
- Should be able to meet the deadline
    - Ray polled both the Fire Chief and Water Dept Superintendent about the ambulance and water main upgrade (included in BAN)
        - Fire Chief stated useful life of ambulance is 10 years
        - Water Dept Superintendent proposed that the useful life of water main is 20 years
            - Ray would like to adopt the Amortization formally
            - **Motion that the Prudential Committee adopt the useful lives as confirmed by Fire Chief Sean Brown as 10 years for the current ambulance and as confirmed by the Water Department Superintendent, Chris Wiseman, 20 years for the recently completed water main upgrade. Fran seconded the motion. All in favor.**
                - Ray stated that the 1st deadline is May 5, 2025, for supporting documentation for the June 6, 2025, BAN. This BAN will be publicized on May 27, 2025, and proceeds rec'd on June 5, 2025, where, upon receipt, pay off the existing $696,000.00 BAN from last year.
                - Ray stated that the minutes will need to be approved by May 5, 2025 (part of the documentation for the June 6, 2025, BAN).

Treasurer's Report

- Not discussed

Auditor's Report

- Not discussed

Cotuit Water Department budget review

- Not discussed

Cotuit Fire Department budget review:

- Not discussed

Cotuit Elementary School Feasibility Study status:
Cotuit School Contract

- Not discussed

Freedom Hall:

- Not discussed

Website Renewal

- Not discussed

Public Comment

- Carol Zais 86 Putnam Avenue commented about the date on the Warrant (27^{th} v. 28^{th})
    - Mark asked to make it on the 28th
- Ms. Zais asked why Capital Articles are placed at the top of the Warrant this year
    - Mark answered that he thought that there would be substantial discussion and that the Committee wants to make sure that the people have the opportunity to speak
- Ms. Zais commented about the By-Laws discussed timeline
    - Mark responded that the language will be changed to March 1 and will be on one of the Articles on the Warrant.
    - Ms. Zais stated that she really thinks that the Committee should make these changes
    - Fran stated that the Chairman of Water and Fire Dept are not on the By-Law Committee and are not writing the report. Charlie should not be chasing reports. This is just putting in a certain date.
    - Ms. Zais stated that Water and Fire did get theirs in on time
    - Fran stated that it is true for the current people.
- Ms. Zais commented about Seth's leeway of $200,000.00 and could that be used for audio/visual equipment. She met with Troy Dennings and he stated the age of the building and age of the equipment. She hopes the discussion continues.
- Patty Daley (through chat) regarding ZOOM meetings
- Steven O'Connor 41 Shell Lane stated that he was surprised by the cumulative numbers in the Warrant
    - He asked why does the Fire Chief needs a $70k truck? Can the Prudential Committee vote that the library receive $25k from the $70k truck as the library is a real benefit for the community and not a detriment?
        - Ray answered that it is the Water Dept. not Fire Dept.
        - Fran stated that she understood and explained what happened in the past.
            - Mr. O'Connor expressed his disappointment and stated that the library is a community resource.

Fran made the Motion to Adjourn. Mark seconded. All in favor.