

## **Finance Committee**

### **Minutes**

**March 30, 2009**

A joint meeting between the Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen and School Committee was held on Monday, March 30, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room, Town Hall with the following Finance Committee Members present: R. Knobel, M. Kent, L. Donovan, M. Barry, M. Hickey, T. Bowen, C. Lane, T. Jalkut, P. Stasiukevicius and M. Gallivan. Also in attendance was Town Administrator M. Boynton, and Assistant Town Administrator J. Johnson.

Selectmen in attendance were C. Winston, C. Snuffer, D. Sullivan, C. Timson and A. DeNapoli.

School Committee Members in attendance were N. Gallivan, D. Bergen, M. Berry, B. Walsh and J. Desmond.

7:30 p.m. - Joint meeting was called to order by Finance Committee Chairman T. Jalkut.

#### **Town Administrator's Update**

Mr. Boynton spoke to all the work that has been done with the various committees the last couple of weeks, all things being very positive and having arrived at a consensus on the revue. The cooperation and effort has been outstanding by the various committees. There is still a million dollar shortfall, impacts will be significant, and trying to minimize the impact on services. Everyone needs to understand that there are no final numbers till the State Budget is set. He anticipates that the numbers will be worked on through the summer and any changes taken up at the Fall Annual Town Meeting. He has spoken to the Library Trustees and they are planning to put an article on the Spring Town Meeting for the new library. Town Administrator's FY2010 Funding Resources dated 3/30/2009 there is available an additional \$1,241,410 (municipal share of \$422,079, school share of \$819,331).

Superintendent of Schools L. Lynch and School Committee Chairman N. Gallivan recapped the School Department's Budget Worksheet reflecting reductions to the original request submitted to the Town in January, 2009. Reductions include cuts to salaries, wages, goods and services as well as new revenue offsets from the federal stimulus package, local revenue and expense adjustments. As of March 27, 2009 they anticipate eliminating 20 employees, six of whom are professionals and being replaced with para-professionals. 50 additional employees hours of not less 15% of their current work hours. In addition to these changes, School Committee will have to still reduce the budget an additional \$825,00. They are aggressively pursuing relief from mandates from the state, working cooperatively with the unions for concessions and working with the Town

Administrator to create ways to close the gap. The original budget submission represented a level services budget. School Committee has tried to make decisions that they could survive with and not impact the children in the classroom.

Original budget submission was for \$33,059,787 (5.9% increase), Town Administrator's target budget of \$29,812,609, split of health and property insurance of \$98,331 with an adjusted appropriation of \$29,910,940. Tried to make decisions that they could survive, tried not to impact the children in the classroom. Needed to eliminate 14 full time positions, decrease 15% of the hours for instructional aids (25 people) and replacing three media teachers with media aides. Speech therapy – using assistants, not taking away a service, six positions won't be staffed at same level.

Superintendent Lynch presented an employee list comparing the number of employees in different years. He spoke to hoping the legislatures get to work and provide help to the Towns. He does not know whether the House will support local communities and fears that they will reduce Chapter 78 funds. School Administration has had good conversation with the Teacher's union, feels their might be some concessions next month, they are looking at health insurance, working days without pay, tuition reimbursement and -0- for contracts. It is hoped that these concessions will help their deficit.

Budget Reductions for Support Services in the amount of \$2,380,000, \$260,000 for Indirect Instructional Services and elimination of two classroom teachers (Wood Program at middle schools (\$65,000) Grade 3,4,5 Boyden Math Teacher (\$45,000) for a total FY10 Budget of \$2,750,000.

N. Gallivan spoke to the School Committee eliminating 14 positions and trying to be responsible and they weren't afraid of making changes. They are looking into privatization of speech services. If they don't get help from the State, there will have to be additional layoffs in the classroom.

Town Administrator hopes that the State Budget will be done by Town Meeting. The present numbers are as comfortable as they can be, any major changes would be moving targets. They need to look at FY09, as it is in a deficit situation. The biggest problem is the \$818,000 deficit for snow and ice.

### **FY09 Budget Status**

Administrator has used over 1.7 million in reserves for FY09 to fund the deficit and keep service reductions and prevent layoffs. Next year won't be able to do the same. He feels it would not be prudent to use any additional reserves other than unemployment.

The status of the Economic Development Officer was question as this position had been increased from part time to full time. Town Administrator feels that in order to take advantage of an economic swing, need this position in place. This position is a priority of

the Board of Selectmen, working on revitalization of work downtown, Federal Stimulus funds and Grants.

C. Winston spoke to being supportive of this position. Individual is getting to know the community, meeting with company owners, developers, real team player, working on obtaining grants for various departments and is available to help the schools and would like to see the position stay.

Major issue pending is the library not losing accreditation. He is presently in collective bargaining with Fire and Library unions. He is trying to be creative, Building Maintenance Budget is a huge issue. He has restored \$421,675 but Library is still a 12.1% cut and he is trying to ensure state certification. Library cut can be within 5% of the average municipal cuts. Municipal cuts are 3.9% if snow and ice isn't counted. He has increased the snow and ice budget next year by \$275,000, this is driving the library certification number.

N. Gallivan spoke to school and municipal trying to understand what each one is trying to do. Don't want to micromanagement each other's budgets.

A. DeNapoli spoke to the importance of public safety, town has limited revenue services, feels economic development will be available in the future. Town doesn't have many revenue sources, and someone needs to be there to try to develop it.

T. Jalkut – Library essential to the town, position of assistant library director is being eliminated, they will stay be able to stay open the same hours,

Town Administrator spoke to debt exclusion override for the new library is still out there, failure to receive certification puts this project in jeopardy. It all hinges on town meeting and passage of the ballot question.

Town Administrator spoke to working with 9 collective bargaining units, municipal and schools collaboratively, but can't say there will be concessions. They are looking at wage concessions, health insurance and discussions on what they can do to preserve positions. Legislatures are going to be taking up mandates. Health insurance is the #1 item for them but the plan and design is left up to the executive boards of the communities. Gas hike is still on the table and there will be revenue discussions and legislatures will come out with one package, it is not known what the dollar amount will be. The \$470,000 assessment needs to be looked at by the MBTA, fee system should be driving the process, pension reform doesn't go far enough.

Superintendent Lynch spoke to working with other superintendents, focusing the money on growth and per pupil costs, if proposal is accepted, hopefully every community would receive more. \$168,000,000 in stimulus package.

N. Gallivan spoke to now being the time to call the state legislatures and for a more equitable way with the federal monies and relief from the mandates. It is hoped that a large group (50 – 60 people) will attend the Suburban Coalition Breakfast on April 14. She feels that municipal and schools have done a lot of work towards balancing the budget. Many things there is no control over, \$380,000 goes to Charter Schools, and the snow and ice deficit of \$818,000 would have to be made up by cutting services. There is value in working together, possibly be a follow up meeting with the boards.

T. Jalkut credited the Town Administrator and Superintendent of Schools for all the work that has been done in working through this budget process.

N. Gallivan spoke to it being good to be together and realize the \$825,000 deficit is a real challenge and asked for help in working with the state legislatures, lobbying the legislatures is one of the best uses. Schools have attempted not to mislead people. Unions have to understand what the issues are.

C. Snuffer spoke to a list of talking points to be presented to the state legislatures and it was suggested that it be one sheet from Walpole with 5 – 8 points.

9:15 p.m. – Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril  
Clerk