

FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES

February 27, 2017

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Monday, February 27, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room, Walpole Public Library, with the following members present: D. Bruce, J. Burke, R. Nottebart, A. Healy, R. Mariani, M. Trudell, T. Bowen, J. Leith, J. Stasiukevicius K. Guyette, S. Lawson, E. Barmakian, J. Vaillancourt and P. Hinton. Absent: J. Denneen. Also present was Fire Chief Bailey.

7:00 p.m. – Quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by the Chairman D. Bruce.

Appointments

School Committee re: FY2018 Proposed School Budget

Present were: School Committee Members: N. Gallivan, Chairperson, School Committee Members J. Geosits, B. Muccini, W. Buckley and M. Breen. Superintendent of Schools L. Lynch and Assistant Superintendents J. Kenny, School Business Manager M. Frascia. C. Duggan, Fisher School Principal along with members of the Full Day Kindergarten Task Force.

School Committee is requesting \$42,998,024 . Town Administrator's recommendation is 42,626,773. This represents a gap in the amount of \$371,251 of which \$237,000 is for reduced tuition for FDK without the FDK gap is \$134,000. Percentage increase in School Committee request is 3.64%. or 1.5 million) (Town Administrator is 2.74%.) Last year the budget increased 3.88%. School Department receives reimbursements in the amount of \$1,924,964, Offsets, User Fees and Tuitions in the amount of \$1,774,952 and Grants in the amount of \$1,669,180. School Department is optimistic that State Aid will increase. Committee would like to see actual numbers in personnel and expenses and the enrollment population for the last five years. It is difficult to say what we can afford.

Budget drivers are the collective bargaining increases, increase in the bus contract and six additional special education positions. Special Education is 26% of the budget. Unfunded an Underfunded State and Federal Education mandates are part of the funding problem.

School Department has a new Special Education Program for Boyden and Walpole High School. Each program requires a moderate Special Needs teacher and two education support professionals. Programs will support approximately 5 students each. School Committee prefers that special needs students to be served within the Walpole schools, whenever possible. This avoids tuition and transportation costs.

Full Day Kindergarten -85% of the families pay for their child to attend, parents cite price as prohibitive. School Committee feels full day kindergarten is an academic necessity and increases expectations in grades one and two. Curriculum changes with full day vs one half day. The disadvantage to one half day is that there is less hours for repetitive practice and children lack the stamina for grades one and two. Families struggle to pay for full day kindergarten. There are 300 eligible students for full day kindergarten. Numbers are based on projections. School Department is choosing to do this, Town doesn't have to fund the FDK. Committee had questions on where we get the extra money to fund the FDK.. Committee spoke to funding FDK will decrease revenue coming in. There is the need to look at bus fees, athletic fees and extended day programs and why are we picking out FDK. Superintendent Lynch spoke to the standards being uniform throughout the State on FDK. There is a consistency from Town to Town.

March 6, 2017, Finance Committee will meet on a presentation from the Full Day Kindergarten Task Force.

Foundation Budget was suppose to address inadequacies, health insurance and special ed. Hopefully there is an increase. Optimistic that state aid will increase at the state level.

Transportation Update, School Business Manager M. Frascia updated the committee on transportation. Schools presently have 16 vans., program to use our own vans was started five years ago. They presently have over five vehicles with over 100,000 miles. They went to Capital Budget for wheel chair vans. They bought additional vans for McKinny-Vinto Act. They are very prudent on the maintenance of the vans and use local vendors. He will provide to the committee information on the vans that was provided to the Capital Budget Committee. Budget split base on Town Administrator's recommendations. Some of the Town services are not included in the number.

Committee discussed that there is no control of sustainable numbers and these numbers need to be sustained for at least three years. What happens if the funds are not available the second year.

Prison Mitigation monies cannot be counted on, but most likely will receive monies in State Aid. State Aid is increased in Foundation Budget. Chapter 70 funding was only cut once in 19 years.

Text Books - \$105,000 has been taken out of operating budget for text books of social studies at high school, middle school math. Schools are looking at an entirely new program for the math standards. Middle Schools – They are purchasing science books and implementation of new science standard along with new science books at the elementary levels. They are continuing with English, Language Arts resources that they presently have and developing a strategic digital plan on the use of online resources.

Utilities – Schools take advantage and shift money around for utilities, they have done programs for water usage. They have changed all the light bulbs in the buildings to LED and reallocated the monies. They have also brought in a consultant that looks at ways to save money.

Schools try to be a team player. They feel the needs at the municipal side are valid. There needs to be a dialogue on what a reasonable amount is to keep up with services. Budget cuts mean reduced services.

FinCom needs to look to the future and at the numbers especially the variables and what would happen if we don't receive the variables. It is difficult to say what we can afford and hard to predict the future. There are limits due to Prop 2 ½.

If the Finance Committee Members have any questions on the budget, please forward them on to the Chairman.

Adjourn:

MOTION MADE by R. Nottebart, Seconded by K. Guyette to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m., Motion Passed, Unanimous (14-0-0) (14 voting)

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril
Clerk