

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes**

**December 8, 2014**

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Monday, December 8, 2014 at 7:30 p.m. in the Finance Committee Room, #112, Town Hall with the following members present: D. Bruce, J. Denneen, J. McDermott, J. Burke, C. Lane, A. Ragosta, A. Healy, M. Iwanowicz, J. Lowre, M. Trudell, T. Williams, S. Lawson, D. Crowley, P. Hinton and A. Walsh. Also in attendance was Finance Director M. Thompson, Town Accountant J. Cuneo, and Fire Chief T. Bailey. Superintendent of Schools L. Lynch, Assistant Superintendent J. Kenney and Business Manager M. Friscia, and Special Needs Coordinator L. McKelligan School Committee Members: P. Shield, N. Gallivan, M. Ryan, B. Muccini, J. Geosits and M. Breen, President of Walpole Teacher's Union D. Cussi and RTM Member S. Ober.

7:30 p.m. – Quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by the Chairman D. Bruce.

#### **New Members**

Committee welcomed Ann Ragosta and A. Walsh to the Committee. They are filling the unexpired terms of D. DiCenso and S. Ahmed.

#### **Reserve Fund Transfer – Board of Selectmen/Expenses**

M. Gallivan, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen spoke to this request for \$17,500. It was explained that with the departure of the previous Town Administrator, the Selectmen have entered into a professional service agreement with the Edward Collins Center at UMASS Boston to assist in the search. This was an unanticipated expense in this year's budget. \$14,000 is the fixed portion of the agreement and the balance is for advertising/reimbursement for background checks, etc. Job has been posted through December. Time frame is the applications are due the end of January, presented to Selectmen in February, then on to screening committee. Search Committee will narrow the amount of applicants down to 50 – 60 to review and narrow down to three or four finalists to be recommended to the Board of Selectmen. Interim Town Administrator will be given equal consideration, due to his experience of putting a budget together and preparation of town meeting. Screening Committee is made up of five individuals: E. Kraus, J. O'Neil, J. Moraski, F. Wilbur and K. Turco.

FinCom Members spoke to wanting an opportunity to participate in the process. Committee had originally asked for two members to be on the Screening Committee as they felt there was the need for their input with the amount of interaction between the

Committee and Town Administrator. To date there has been no response to this request from the Selectmen. Screening Committee will sit in the interviews, Selectmen have the final decision on the hiring. M. Gallivan will have a discussion with the Board and the Collins Center on this request.

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by D. Crowley to approve a Reserve Fund Transfer in the amount of \$17,500 for the Board of Selectmen – Expenses/ Professional Services), Motion Passed (15-0-0) (15 voting)

### **School Budget Update/Special Needs**

Chairman D. Bruce turned the meeting over for the discussion on the School Budget to the Vice Chairman J. McDermott, to avoid any potential conflict.

Superintendent Lynch spoke to the School Administration attempting to being proactive and provide information to the Finance Committee of a projected budget deficit for FY15 in the amount of \$541,467 on the Special Education Budget. Since the Spring of 2014, the School have received 168 new students with a migration out of 86, for a net increase of 82, 16% of the total students have special needs and an Individual Education Plan (IEP). District currently has an average of 14% Special Education population.

This projected deficit is the result of additional tuitions, contracted services and a drop of \$150,000 in tuition in students. There has been a significant increase in mental health and behavioral deficiencies that require the assistance of a behavioral instructors for students and to train teachers. Budget difficulties are occurring due to Federal and State mandates and regulations. Federal Government originally was to reimburse the Towns at a rate of 40%, State 50%, currently the Federal reimbursing is 5-8% and the State at 18% (Circuit Breaker). The number of students in and out of the district is unpredictable. Schools have saved \$111,000 in special education transportation. They continue to work with the legislatures. There is no question that these children need services, but it is the responsibility of the Federal and State to provide for what they originally promised.

Another issue facing the schools is the substitute teachers, special needs require highly trained professionals and they won't work for \$70/day. They are legally mandated to provide services. Bridge program located at Plimpton School is for students that can't do the work required in a traditional high school. They are transferred to the high school when ready and able. Town has done significant renovations at the Plimpton School. There has been an increase in kindergarten students with mental health problems and it is not safe for them to be in a classroom, and they are not able to provide the services required in a traditional classroom.

Director of Student Services, L. McKelligan – provided an overview of the 49 students with FY15 tuition changes as of November 30, 2014. Special Education was established by State and Federal statutes to provide services for ages 3-22 that don't have a high

school diploma. Standard has been set by the Supreme Court and it is a requirement that an IEP be provided for each student. Process involved is very cumbersome. Obligation of the School District is to provide for students with disabilities. They are required to do multiple screenings and to reach out to children with disabilities that can't function academically. Staff has to be licensed appropriately. They are obligated to provide services to private schools and required to evaluate students for tutoring who reside in Walpole. District is also responsible for group homes.

October 1, 362 students eligible for special education, 174 in district, and 41 out of district, 28 students at Longview Farms. Others receive related services. 51.5 special ed teachers, Special ed staff consists of around 150, representing 35% of the school staff.

### **Tuition changes for FY15**

Contract services, need highly qualified staff that aren't part of the special education staff: i.e. interpreters, hearing impaired students, technology consultants, vision impaired specialist, neuron psychologist, try to provide students to obtain the highest quality of staff to analyze the students.

Superintendent Lynch spoke to Walpole spending \$1200 below the state average in per pupil costs. State and Federal Government left these kids behind. They are trying to control the costs as best they can. They have reorganized the school nutrition program, and special education transportation costs. Walpole has a number of students in programs at the TEC Center in East Walpole, this provides for low transportation costs. 42 students take on-line courses that can't be offered at the high school.

D. Bruce spoke to the Committee being appreciative of receiving a mid-year update. Superintendent Lynch spoke to following up in February, March and April to provide further updates. They should know by mid April on any settlement and know the state numbers by then. Town is facing many issues with increases in special education budgets and increase health insurance costs.

N. Gallivan spoke to previously having a contingency in the special education budget, but in FY10 being faced with setting aside money in a contingency fund or having layoffs and the money was used to save positions. There is volatility Override didn't put any additional money in special ed. Budgets are tight, and they might need to access the IDEA Account.

S. Lawson spoke to the increase in population of medical and disability students in the school system, they would previously have been in an institution. State paid for the running of these schools, not included in the property taxes, reality is that expenses and responsibility have been shifted to the communities and haven't received the funds. General population is unaware of what is happening, dealing with population that comes and goes.

This needs to be dealt with at state and federal level to fund the mandates that are imposed on us. Mandates must be met, what is the affect on the rest of the population.

D. Bruce extended the Committee thanks to L. McKelligan for the presentation.

Committee spoke to a lot of towns getting upset with Department of Education, this was a good meeting, very informative and gets the information out but need to solve the problem. Special education in Walpole is outstanding and they do an excellent job.

### **Minutes**

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by P. Hinton to accept the September 18, 2014 Minutes, Motion Passed (11-1-3) (D. Bruce opposed) (S. Lawson, A. Walsh and A. Ragosta abstained )(15 voting)

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by D. Crowley to accept the September 25, 2014 Minutes, Motion Passed (12-0-3) (J. Lowre, A. Ragosta and A. Walsh abstained) (15 voting)

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by P. Hinton to accept the October 15, 2014 Minutes, Motion Passed (13-0-2) (A. Ragosta and A. Walsh abstained) (15 voting)

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson to accept the November 3, 2014 Minutes, Motion Passed (9-0-6) (D. Bruce, P. Hinton, J. Lowre, A. Healy, D. Crowley, and A. Walsh abstained) (15 voting)

### **Meeting Schedule**

No meetings presently scheduled at this time. J. Johnson, Interim Town Administrator will be presenting the FY2016 Budget Message on Monday, February 2, 2015 and Committee will begin meeting on February 5, 2014.

### **Budget Information**

The budget process and directives issued by the Interim Town Administrator on preparing the FY2016 budget will be e-mailed to the committee members for their information. Field trips on various town facilities will be set up at a later date along with a review of the proposed Capital projects.

School Budget – There needs to be addressed at the State and Federal level on the mandates. There is a need to be careful that it doesn't overwhelm the municipal side.

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Committee will meet again with the School Department in February, March and April on the special needs deficit.

9:45 p.m. – P. Hinton left the meeting

**Adjourn:**

**MOTION MADE** by J. Denneen, Seconded by D. Crowley to adjourn at 9:50 p.m.  
Motion Passed, (14-0-0) (Unanimous) (14 voting

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril  
Clerk

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