

FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES

March 6, 2017

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Monday, March 6, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in Room #112, Town Hall with the following members present: D. Bruce, J. Denneen, M. Trudell, J. Vaillancourt, P. Stasiukevicius, R. Nottebart, K. Guyette, T. Bowen, J. Leith, S. Lawson, R. Mariani, A. Healy, and P. Hinton. Members absent were: K. Guyette, and J. Burke. Also in attendance was Town Administrator J. Johnson, Finance Director M. Thompson, Fire Chief T. Bailey, School Committee Chairman N. Gallivan, School Superintendent L. Lynch, Assistant School Superintendent J. Kenny and School Business Manager M. Frascia and members of the Full Day Kindergarten Task Force.

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

May 1, 2017 Spring Town Meeting Updates

Town Administrator provided the Committee with updated figures on the Debt Budget. Budget is pretty much the same as last year. The final costs of police and fire station are not included due to these projects going out to bid in April.

Committee requested clarifications of the definitions and requested additional information on the titles: Fire Department and Council on Aging are short term for design and are separate appropriations by Town Meeting. Projected non-excluded debts are included in the Debt Budget.

\$172,000,000 is the Town's borrowing limit

MOTION MADE by J. Denneen, Seconded by S. Lawson for Favorable Action on the Debt Budget in the amount of \$3,985,284, Motion Passed (13-0-0) (Unanimous)

7:20 p.m. – School Budget/Special Needs

Speaking to this budget was School Superintendent L. Lynch, Chairman of the School Committee N. Gallivan, Business Director M. Frascia, and Dr. R. Farrell, Special Education Director.

Special Needs - Ms. Gallivan spoke to this budget being very complex, some students don't pay tuition due to being on special programs and Town is required to follow the Special Ed Laws. Dr. Farrell spoke to 26% of the School Budget for FY2018 is for special needs. This number has been pretty consistent for the last five years. Town has

to support children through age 22. They are governed by Federal Laws, Special Education Laws and the McKinney Vento Act (homeless children). FY2017 Special Needs budget was \$3,484,515. FY2018 Budget request is for \$3,519,194. Many students receive services year round, numbers vary in the summer.

Transportation - It is more cost effective to provide transportation within the School Department than to hire outside vendors. Department staff includes occupational, special and language pathologists and also provides nursing services for all students. They sometimes need to hire outside help within the school district on a short term basis. Cost of keeping students in local district is less than sending them out of district, but costs depend on the needs. It is always less expensive to keep in Town, six positions for special needs have been added in the School Department Personnel Budget.

\$14,500 is the per pupil cost and includes the cost of special ed students. Walpole is \$1,000 below the State average for costs.

Unfunded and Underfunded State and Federal Mandates – School Department pursues all avenues to obtain money for the unfunded mandates. If the State cuts back on funding for education, all State mandates still have to be maintained.

Full Day Kindergarten Discussion

P. Duggan, Principal of Fisher School and Chairman of the Kindergarten Task Force. Ms. Duggan extended her thanks to all the parents and School Committee Members and Committee members for their support.

Presently there are 225 students (80.6%) enrolled in Full Day Kindergarten this year and 85% of the parents pay for full day kindergarten. Parents understand the value of the program. Cost is \$3800 in Walpole and is one of the highest in area and 12th highest tuition in the State. Task Force feels it is a disservice not to have access to full day kindergarten. It is a good investment and benefits exceed the cost. School Committee sets the rate for tuition. They feel to invest now and save monies later. Full day kindergarten is unmandated funding. Full Day Kindergarten is more appealing to young families that move to Town. They move to towns that provide it.

School Committee determines where they want to be in the costs. They don't want to be the highest, and have come up with a plan to make it more affordable. Full day kindergarten is a high priority of the School Committee. Parents are willing to work to obtain more funding and are looking for ways to save money. Access to full day kindergarten tuition would be reduced from \$3,800 to \$2,600. They would like to take smaller steps in the funding School Department sets the rate and has to figure out how to pay for it. Finance Committee has to look at other departments: Police Fire, etc. and have to look to the future, three, five and ten years out.

Finance Committee members discussed that the Selectmen voted for a Solid Waste Program that would have represented a \$100,000 in savings. Consideration has to be

given to parents that can't afford to send them full day, it is something we should do but have to think how we can do it. Town needs to work towards free and appropriate education in kindergarten. Committee members requested more information on how it would be phased it. Committee relies on Town Administrator and School Superintendent for ideas on how to fund it.

School Superintendent spoke to wanting to work towards reducing the costs, he will be working with State Legislatures and it is a positive step to work together.

Upcoming Meetings

March 13, 2017 – Board of Selectmen for discussion on FY2018 Budget and Revenues and Trash Contract (Tentative, depending upon Selectmen quorum)

March 20, 2017 - School Committee on Budget/ Full Day Kindergarten

Adjourn:

MOTION MADE by J. Denneen, Seconded by P. Hinton to adjourn at 9:00 p.m.,
Motion Passed

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril, Clerk