

IN BOARD OF SELECTMEN
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2002
SPECIAL MEETING

Present: Chairman John C. Drobinski, Lawrence W. O'Brien, and Kirsten D. Roopenian, Selectmen.

The statutory requirements as to notice having been complied with, the meeting was convened by Chairman Drobinski at 8:30 a.m. in the Loring Parsonage, 288 Old Sudbury Road.

Fiscal Year 2003 Operating Budget

Present: Assistant Town Manager Wayne R. Walker.

Town Manager Maureen G. Valente met with the Selectmen to receive their input on her proposals for budget cuts which will be required to arrive at a budget within Proposition 2 1/2 levy limits and to also look at how various override scenarios would affect the total budgets of the three cost centers of Town, Sudbury Public Schools, and Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School. She began by stating that Town departments had asked for extremely little in budget growth, and that the biggest growth was seen in fixed costs of benefits (\$429,768), utilities (\$97,550), and salaries (\$197,696--less than 3% increase). Nonetheless, without an Override, the Town's budget request would need to be cut back a projected \$973,480 under the ratios agreed upon with the two school systems. Higher salary contract awards by the Sudbury Schools and the much larger budget increases requested by both local and regional schools systems were noted to be impacting annual budgeting problems.

Ms. Valente went over the criteria she used in making budget cuts, as follows: protect Public Safety, use vacancies for layoffs first, eliminate/reduce nearly all travel and professional development, reduce newly added positions for growth, do not cut where revenue would be affected, try creative ways to reduce appropriations, e.g., remove from tax levy, and identify what areas may be the "fattest". She then reviewed with the Board proposed cuts by department to meet a No-Override budget, stating that she still had an additional \$50,000+ in cuts to find.

The Board raised the questions of whether fees could be raised to help increase revenues, whether more cemetery funds could be used, and whether a bylaw change should be proposed at the Annual Town Meeting to eliminate the requirement of delivering the Annual Town Report to every household.

Also provided to the Board was a list of total estimated budget/override scenarios for Town, SPS (Sudbury Public Schools), and LSRHS (Lincoln-Sudbury Regional School), as follows:

- A. No Override - Cut \$4,620,169
- B. 9.69% Increase Override - No cut
- C. 7.18% Increase Override (\$3,423,434) - Cut \$1,196,735 + Minuteman incr. + Articles
- D. 6.00% Increase Override (\$2,861,685) - Cut \$1,758,484 + Minuteman incr. + Articles
- E. 5.26% Increase Override (\$2,509,565) - Cut \$2,110,604 + Minuteman incr. + Articles
- F. 3.50% Increase Override (\$1,669,317) - Cut \$2,950,853 + Minuteman incr. + Articles
- G. 2.50% Increase Override (\$1,192,369) - Cut \$3,427,800 + Minuteman incr. + Articles

A tax impact chart was also distributed.

Fire Chief Michael C. Dunne, Police Chief Peter B. Lembo and Director of Public Works I. William Place jointed the meeting, as their departments were the largest and would bear the largest share of budget reductions. They were given a summary of the Town Manager's proposed budget cuts for discussion purposes, and Ms. Valente repeated for their benefit the approach/criteria she had used in preparing the budget cuts necessary for a No-Override, no growth budget. She stated she had worked with their suggested

budget reductions, in some instances changing where the cuts would be and in some instances making less cuts or further cuts, in keeping with the philosophy identified.

The Police Chief had proposed freezing three police officer positions and not purchasing any of the four cruisers requested, while the Town Manager had proposed cutting clerical and dispatcher positions and purchasing two cruisers instead. Police Chief Lembo commented that he could not cut the clerical budget, as one clerk would be on maternity leave, and thus he would prefer to cut something else. The Town Manager said she did not want to lose the Cops Fast grant by reducing patrolmen, which would be counterproductive; she did not want to impact sector patrolling because of inadequate cruisers; also she sought to make cuts that could be continued another year, if necessary, not one-time cuts that must be put back in the budget the following year. Chief Lembo noted the implication of cuts to his department may mean no liaison with the schools, no safety officer, reduction of detectives, routine patrols affected, putting parking clerk out on patrol, no firearms training, no July Fourth coverage. He made the point that each police officer requires funds to be included for related costs, such as travel, training, uniforms, etc. Currently, he anticipates three vacancies that could be left unfilled.

At the suggestion of Selectman O'Brien, it was agreed the Police Chief would prepare a new two-year budget scenario under whatever figure the Town Manager provides to him for her further consideration.

Concerning the Fire Department, the position of one firefighter, who will be retiring, is proposed to be frozen. A reduction in the Dispatcher line item is also proposed. Chief Dunne informed the Board that cutting the firefighter position would increase the time the North Station may be closed down. In response to the Town Manager regarding the need to find approximately \$50,000 in further cuts, the Fire Chief suggested the following possibilities: 1) Eliminate purchase of a new ambulance and apply money from the Ambulance Fund to offset appropriate items in the operating budget - he felt he could delay the purchase another year, as he has a back-up to use during down time; 2) When he retires, the salary for a new Chief should be about \$15,000 less; 3) A delay in hiring a new Chief could save further dollars with Mr. Dunne serving on a contract basis. The Chief will submit a revised budget proposal, reducing it by the amount needed to arrive at a no-override budget.

The Engineering, Streets and Roads, Trees and Cemeteries, and Parks and Grounds budgets were then discussed with the Director of Public Works. Noting that the Engineering Department was previously reduced, freezing an engineer position would mean much of the work could not be done in-house, but have to be contracted out, for such work as complying with EPA guidelines and the walkway program. Included was discussion about: a) avoiding budgeting for gasoline by making other departments pay for gasoline directly to the supplier, b) turning off street lights where possible, c) the \$70,000 reduction in the Roadwork line item on top of reductions in State Chapter 90 aid, and the liability and greater cost in ultimately needed repairs associated with poorly maintained roads, d) the cost of leasing vehicles (6-7%), and e) the possibility of borrowing for vehicle purchase and road maintenance. It was generally agreed user group fees would need to be increased for recreation facilities.

The Town Manager stated she would consider any new ideas for different cuts the department heads would like to suggest. Chairman Drobinski emphasized that the Selectmen would take a strong position regarding equalizing cuts among the school districts and Town.

Ms. Valente said she needed to review all of the cuts after receiving any new input from department heads and considering today's input from the Board, and she would prepare a revised proposal for the Board's next meeting that she hoped the Board could support.

Selectman Roopenian expressed her need to receive convincing dialogue and figures to arrive at an override position, particularly in view of the conflicting information various people had been telling her. Selectman O'Brien reported on the Finance Committee meeting he had attended when the LSRHS budget had been discussed. He said there was no detail of the impact of a No-Override scenario offered by the High School, and everyone seemed to be needing direction on what total figures they should be budgeting to. He inquired about the Board of Selectmen giving them a figure and when it should take a position on an Override. There was concern by the Board that without specific information from all three cost centers on the impact of cuts at various levels, the Board would be unable to make an informed decision on the question of an Override.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the Town Manager would prepare a memorandum to the Sudbury Public Schools, the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional School District, and the Finance Committee stating the Selectmen are considering Override Option C (7.18% increase) and Option E (5.26% increase), and asking for a detailed explanation of what an Override at these Option levels, as well as a No-Override Budget, would mean for the two school districts. In addition, the communication should state the Selectmen are committed to equity among the three cost centers, and provide specific information on the figures allocated for each cost center and how they were computed.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Attest: _____
Maureen G. Valente
Town Manager-Clerk