

OK

IN BOARD OF SELECTMEN
EMERGENCY MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 1989

Present: Chairman David A. Wallace, John C. Drobinski and Judith A. Cope.

Selectmen Chairman Wallace convened an emergency meeting of the Board of Selectmen, local Sudbury School Committee, Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School Committee and Finance Committee at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School, by reading into the minutes the following notice posted at Town Hall earlier in the day by the Executive Secretary:

An emergency joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen, local Sudbury School Committee, Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School Committee and Finance Committee has been scheduled at 6:00 p.m. on March 28, 1989, for the purpose of discussing the impact of the failure of the Proposition 2½ Override at the Annual Town Election upon the upcoming Annual Town Meeting.

Chairman Wallace explained that the intention for this meeting is to deal with what has occurred at Town Election and to hopefully reach a consensus from the various committees and Town officials as to how to proceed at Town Meeting with regard to the defeat of the Proposition 2½ Override question. Mr. Wallace commended the Finance Committee for having prepared for this contingency occurring, and stated that although he would expect a few normal adjustments to be made, the budget would be presented by the Finance Committee at Town Meeting pretty much as it has outlined.

Mr. Wallace expressed his personal disappointment with the defeat of the Proposition 2½ Override; but emphatically stated that he and all Town officials must accept the fact that the vast majority of the townspeople do not want to spend beyond the Proposition 2½ guidelines; and should honor the spirit of that mandate.

Mr. Wallace commented that what makes this year's fiscal problems especially difficult is that unlike prior years there are no windfalls or other financial support systems to fall back on. Thus, even when just minimum standard cost-of-living increases are given to Town employees, the budget will exceed 2½% per year. Without the override, the Town has reached the point where it has to face some very serious issues; and Mr. Wallace stated that the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School Committee (LSRHS) has done an excellent job in explaining how defeat of the override will affect the Town.

Mr. Wallace concluded by stating that it is his opinion that the Town officials must accept what the townspeople have voted and live within the proposed Finance Committee's "No Override" Budget for this coming fiscal year. Selectmen Cope and Drobinski concurred with Mr. Wallace's opinion, and each expressed his/her own personal disappointment with the vote.

Richard Brooks, Chairman of LSRHS Committee, stated that he shares the attitude of the Selectmen. Mr. Brooks opined that there is no one thing that can be pointed to that should have been better presented to the townspeople, and he does not believe any group did anything wrong for or against the override. Mr. Brooks stated his belief that one of the telling factors in the defeat is that the townspeople could not be assured that an override would not be needed

again in future years; and contrasted defeat of question 1 with approval of question 2 (Senior Citizen Center), by stating that question 2 was passed because it is something that once done will not be required again.

Mr. Brooks expressed his opinion that the people who favored defeat do not want harm to come to the schools and Town departments; but rather they believe there is a need for economy in the Town. Mr. Brooks concluded by stating that he personally believes the only thing to be done at Town Meeting is to go along with the Finance Committee's No Override Budget.

Chairman Wallace agreed wholeheartedly with Mr. Brooks' comments and observations. Mr. Wallace informed that he believed there were technicalities that might be attempted at Town Meeting that would, in effect, lessen the impact of the override defeat. In explanation, based on interpretation of a written opinion from the Department of Revenue, the Town may be able to vote items at Town Meeting which would override the budget, thus requiring another Town Election concerning another override vote. But Mr. Wallace stressed that he believes the Town has clearly spoken and it would be a mistake to do this and go against the Town's wishes.

LSRHS Committee member Sarah C. Holden of Lincoln pointed out that the Town also speaks at Town Meeting; and she queried whether it might be helpful to explain at Town Meeting that certain items are needed by the Town, which may prompt the townspeople to agree an additional expenditure is justified. Ms. Holden opined that there is a possibility that the defeat may have been because the townspeople did not like the magnitude of the override, but may agree to an override in a lesser amount. Chairman Wallace responded by saying that, although technically there may be a way for this to be done, he does not believe that from a practical standpoint it would be wise to do this, as it may create larger problems and be extremely cumbersome to the Town. Mr. Wallace further pointed out that some 4,000+ townspeople voted at the Election; but that even when Town Meeting is considered well-attended, there are only between 200-400 people present. Thus, Mr. Wallace does not believe it would serve the Town well to attempt to push something through at Town Meeting.

John B. Hepting of the Finance Committee (FinCom) explained that when the budgets were being considered, FinCom made it clear to all department heads that there was a very real possibility that the override would fail, and the information concerning the effect of a defeat of the override was well explained. Mr. Hepting informed that the strategy was to level fund all departments in the Town, except in certain instances such as debt service and increased insurance costs. Another exception, Mr. Hepting explained, are the Enterprise Funds for the Landfill and Septage Facility, since extra funds are needed to get them started.

Mr. Hepting explained that the final no-override differential was determined to be between \$250,000-260,000, and this was applied on FinCom's priority list basis. The schools, K-8, received the lion's share. The amount which could have gone to the High School would have been insignificant to their needs; thus, FinCom routed that money to the Fire Department, Police Department and the hiring of a custodian for the Library. In conclusion, Mr. Hepting stated that FinCom will have to recommend at Town Meeting the No Override Budget as printed in the Warrant. Mr. Hepting supported Mr. Wallace's position and stated that he believes the best way to proceed is not to fight the vote.

School Committee Chairman Stephen L. Bober expressed his personal extreme disappointment in the defeat of the override, and stated that the School Committee would be meeting tomorrow evening, March 29, 1989, to discuss taking an official position with regard to how to proceed at Town Meeting. In response to inquiry by Selectman Drobinski, Mr. Bober stated he cannot adequately address what will happen to the schools' operating budget; but Mr. Bober stressed that it is a serious situation and expressed his concern that the quality of the schools would be affected.

Schools Superintendent David E. Jackson pointed out that the schools have outlined with a fair degree of specificity the possible outcome a defeat of the override would have on the schools, including the reduction of teaching staff, increased class size; and reduction of non-staffing items. All areas of the budget are being reviewed, Dr. Jackson stated, and he recognizes that any actions taken will be greeted with a great deal of dismay.

LSRHS Committeeman David S. Pettit expressed his concern for the Special Education program; and he stated that they will be meeting as a Committee to come up with the best solution to a bad situation. Mr. Pettit further predicted that this override defeat will have a reasonably significant impact on real estate values on the Town; and that impact will take a fairly long time to turn around. Mr. Pettit believes that a decline in the quality of education will be severe enough to impact peoples' willingness to move into or stay in the Town.

There was further discussion concerning the possible adverse effects on the quality of education in Sudbury. LSRHS Superintendent Robert Gardner cited the adverse effect of cutting out, for example, the allocation for library books for one year; and he stated that although something like this would not be immediately perceptible, it would eventually show and would be difficult to gain it back in budgets for future years.

Mr. Brooks reiterated his belief that to attempt to subvert the wishes of the ballot voters would cause a polarization of the Town and not serve its needs. Mr. Brooks pointed out that looking at the present budget in a positive light, if a poorer community was able to have our Town's non-override budget, that community would think it was a lavish one.

Selectman Cope stated that a month ago she was betting on an easy passage, but that she has seen changes in the past few weeks. Mrs. Cope further stated her belief that the voters will in the future put the money out if needed; but that some of the issues brought out in the pre-election campaign should be addressed. Mrs. Cope pointed out that other towns have also had overrides turned down; and she expressed her hope that the schools will concentrate on academics and not peripheral issues such as parking and smoking. Mrs. Cope concluded by stating that she would like to see Sudbury compete academically with towns with whom we compare and compete with salaries.

LSRHS Committee member Geraldine C. Nogelo stated that since the results of the election have been made known, her telephone has not stopped ringing, and she has received a lot of input. Mrs. Nogelo commented that the Town needs to pull together and cooperate, and provide as much service as it possibly can.

Mr. Pettit strongly disagreed with Selectman Cope's belief that the vote at Town Election on the override was a referendum on the quality of education.

Mr. Pettit opined that while the schools have to make some adjustments, and they certainly need to do a better job of informing the public as to their needs, he believes the override vote was a money issue; that people simply did not want to spend the money.

Executive Secretary Thompson stated that he personally had been in favor of the override; but that it is imperative to go to Town Meeting together as an elective body and follow FinCom's recommendations. Mr. Thompson pointed out that there is action that might be taken after Town Meeting to lessen the impact of the defeat, and cited Cherry Sheets, Overlay General Receipts and Available Funds as three sources of potential additional monies.

After further discussion, Mr. Hepting pointed out that there is one remaining source of money, the Stabilization Fund. Mr. Hepting explained that this fund is held sacred specifically for emergency and needed expenditures for such things as boilers and other capital expenditures. Use of the monies in this fund requires a 2/3 vote; may be used for items which can be bonded; and there is currently \$606,000 in it. Mr. Hepting stressed that he hopes this fund is not "raided" for use in the Operating Budget; and cautioned that it is not available to LSRHS, but is available to the rest of the Town.

Chairman Wallace thanked all in attendance for their input and expressed his pleasure in the consensus of the majority of those present to support the non-override budget that will be presented at Town Meeting by the FinCom. Mr. Wallace expressed his hope that the schools will join this consensus following their meeting tomorrow evening.

The emergency meeting concluded at 7:15 p.m.

Attest:

Richard E. Thompson
Executive Secretary-Clerk