

Finance Committee ~ Minutes of Meeting
Thursday, January 30, 2003
Town Hall - 7:30pm

Present: Co-Chairs Michael Grosberg & Tracy Billig, Larry Rowe, Sheila Stewart, John Nikula, Bob Jacobson, Don Hutchinson, Bob Hurstak, Marty Ragonas. Also present: Kerry Speidel, Finance Director, Robin Porcella, Recording Secretary, Maureen Valente Town manager, Larry O'Brien, Selectmen, and SPS School Committee members.

Opening Remarks from Co-Chairs

Co-Chair Michael Grosberg opened the meeting at 7:47pm. He asked that all committee members review the minutes from the previous meetings, and state any concerns they might have.

Sheila Stewart asked that on the January 21, 2003 minutes on the sections regarding the CPC Annual budget, to add Sigrid Pickering, CPC Co-Chair, name to the list of presenters.

VOTED: Move to approve the minutes from the prior meetings (Jan. 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 23, 2003).
Motion made by Bob Jacobson and seconded by Don Hutchinson. On vote, motion carries 9 in favor and 0 opposed.

Questions / Concerns from the attendees in the audience:

Co-Chair Michael Grosberg asked if any attendees in the audience if they had any questions or concerns that they might like to state before the committee started their deliberations.

Hans Lopater, Chairman of the Goodnow Library Trustees, suggested that the committee bring to the attention of the citizens of the Town the deficit that the Atkinson Pool is facing. He requested that the exact amount of money put into the Pool should be determined and how many families from Sudbury actually used the pool.

Marty Ragonas agreed with the requests and issue that Mr. Lopater was presenting. Bob Hurstak reminded the committee that not only is the pool currently a financial issue, but there is great potential for safety issues with all the maintenance and equipment problems that the pool is faced with.

John Nikula, liaison to the Pool, said he would contact Dennis Mannone, Park & Rec. Director, to obtain the figures that Mr. Lopater requested. John also reminded the committee that it was a disaster the last time the pool tried to raise it's fees.

Item 2: Update on meeting with Paul Kenny, Town Counsel, and discussion on disclaimer issue:

Tracy Billig informed the committee that she and Michael Grosberg met with Paul Kenny, and that it was an informative meeting. She stated that Paul Kenny agreed with Maureen Valente, and that this would not effect Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School.

Paul Kenny informed Tracy Billig that past history shows that if the Town is made to come back to a Special Town Meeting to approve the appropriation, the Town votes in favor of the increase. There is no benefit in this strategy according to Paul Kenny.

Bob Hurstak stated that this is an issue for the Finance Committee to present to the Taxpayers, and it should be brought forward at Town Meeting if possible.

Maureen Valente, Town Manager, reminded the committee that Town Meeting only approves the appropriation of money, and has no effect on whether or not the contract gets approved.

Marge Wallace, citizen of Sudbury, wanted to remind everyone that the contracts are approved for a 3 year time period, and that the citizens are not aware of the total costs that effect years 2 and 3 of the contract.

Michael Grosberg asked if would be possible to get Paul Kenny to attend a future meeting to discuss this issue. Maureen Valente stated she would look into it.

Item 3: Discussion of allocating deficit in zero percent budget:

Michael Grosberg stated this is something he never had to go through with the Town of Sudbury.

John Nikula stated that in the past the committee used to go department by department, and would take a good look at how much money was coming in compared to expenses. He does not believe the budget cuts should be proportionate.

Bob Hurstak stated that the first thing the committee needs to do is to get the budget balanced. Then they need to decide if the cost center's cuts should be divided equally. His believe is that the Town does not have the capacity to share the same cost cuts as the other cost centers. Currently he is leaning towards a 3% budget increase for the Town and 0% for Sudbury Public Schools and Lincoln-Sudbury High School.

Larry Rowe believes the Town has a much smaller budget, and that the total budget should be divided proportionate. He also believes the Town should fully fund Minuteman High School.

Tracy Billig asked if all committee members support the Minuteman budget. All members agreed.

Bob Jacobson prefers to table any decision until he hears more from Maureen Valente and Kerry Speidel. He would like to know if the cost centers can come up with a rationale as to the cuts.

Don Hutchinson believes the cuts should be proportionate. He believes the committee should use other bases besides last year's figures. The committee needs to look at the past couple of years.

Bob Hurstak stated the Town is operating with 3 less police, 5 to 6 less Highway employees, and asked if the Town should continue this way. He believes that cuts should not be proportionate.

Sheila Stewart said she agreed with what both Bob Hurstak and Don Hutchinson had to say. She would like more information from the schools on how budget cuts would effect them, not only dollars amounts. She is leaning towards the budget cuts being proportionate.

Marty Ragones believes proportionate cuts are a good way to begin.

Bob Jacobson states that he does not have a history with the Finance Committee, and that he goes by how he would run his business. He believes that three cost centers should try to come up with an agreement. He is leaning towards proportionate cuts.

Item 4: Update on Wednesday's Budget meeting:

Bob Jacobson, Marty Ragones, and Sheila Stewart attended the meeting on 1/29/03. Representatives from all 3 cost centers were in attendance as well. Each cost center explained it's budget request and clarified that under the 0% scenario, no money was allocated to fund new union contracts. Maureen Valente advised the group that the estimated deficit is \$391,787. The group generally agreed that each cost center should go back and make additional cuts based on their proportionate share of the budget. The group agreed to have Maureen Valente determine the proportionate share of the budget and advise the group by Friday (1/31/03).

The group agreed to meet again on February 4, 2003 and agreed that it was important for the same people to attend each meeting.

Item 5: Deadline for FinCom Warrant Report:

Co-Chairs Michael Grosberg & Tracy Billig asked committee members to have their respected portion of the Final FinCom Report to them by February 10, 2003 so that they and Larry Rowe will have a chance to proof read and suggest any changes. They suggested that email would be the best alternative to send the proofs.

Other Business:

John Nikula asked if the Town could deficit spend the cost of fuel. Maureen Valente informed him that only the Snow & Ice budget, and fees for court cases can be deficit spent.

Larry O'Brien asked that if the Finance Committee was going to make any recommendations at Town Meeting, and that they let Board of Selectmen know by February 12, 2003.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:10pm