

Town of Sudbury ~ Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting
Monday - September 20, 2004
Fairbanks Senior Center - 7:30pm

Present: Co-Chairs Bob Jacobson and Marty Ragonas, Michael Grosberg, Bill Kneeland, John Nikula, Larry Rowe. Also present: Sue Petersen, Finance Director, and Robin Porcella, Recording Secretary.

Item 1: Opening remarks:

The meeting was opened at 7:36pm.

Item 2: Approve minutes:

Bob Jacobson asked if there were any concerns in regards to the August 16, 2004 minutes.

Voted: Motion to approve the minutes of the August 16, 2004 meeting. Motion made by Marty Ragonas and seconded by Bill Kneeland. On vote, motion carries 5 (Jacobson, Grosberg, Kneeland, Nikula, & Ragonas) in support, 0 opposed, and 1 absent (Rowe).

Item 3: Discussion of revenues for FY06:

Town Manager Maureen Valente introduced Sue Petersen, who was appointed the Town's new Finance Director.

Maureen Valente stated that locals receipts are slightly down, Motor Vehicle receipts are lower than last year, and Investment Income is way down. The first major motor vehicle excise commitment is scheduled for January.

Michael Grosberg asked what free cash actually consisted of. He thought it was what was left over from the previous year. Sue Petersen stated it was more than that. The free cash needs to go to the DOR to get certified. She stated that they do not need this figure before December, and that they can not take the average from the past couple of years. There are a lot of factors that effect free cash. Maureen Valente stated that she agreed with Sue, that they can not use a figure based on the average of the past few years.

Maureen Valente stated that they will get a better idea about the free cash figure. Right now the Treasurer's Office is a little behind since there is no Treasurer. Michael Grosberg asked how the hiring process has been going to fill the vacancies in the Treasurer's office. Maureen stated that they have had a few good candidates apply, but no one seems to have a lot of municipal experience.

Bob Jacobson stated that the overlay surplus is the biggest number. Maureen Valente stated that this figure is strictly up to the Assessors. They need to set money aside to cover abatements.

Maureen Valente stated that the revenue projections right now reflect level funding. We are better off this year, than we have been in the past.

Item 4: Discussion of guidelines to cost centers:

Bob Jacobson asked if the committee wanted to issue the letter. Marty Ragonas stated yes, the cost centers need to see it.

Bob Jacobson stated that he will send a copy of the letter to the Lincoln FinCom, so that they can get any responses they have ready for the 10/4 meeting.

Michael Grosberg asked why in Milestone #2, it stated "excluding pensions and insurance line item". Maureen Valente stated that we will know the exact insurance enrollment figures in November, due to open enrollment.

Item 5: Discussion of "Budget Awareness FY06" presentation:

Bob Jacobson stated the purpose of this project is to educate the voters, and not to advocate on behalf of any of the cost centers. The committee should state that facts, and not offer an opinion. Rather than do a "road show", the possibility of doing a taped show on the cable channel was suggested. The show could run through December, right up to the date of the Town Meeting.

Larry Rowe stated that he liked the like idea of the taped shows, but believes it will be incredibly hard to keep the discussion neutral.

Bob Jacobson stated that the goal is to get all the facts together and then the committee will get a chance to determine what is to be considered neutral. He stated that SPS and LSRHS seemed to be very open to this and seemed willing to get information to the FinCom.

Bob Jacobson stated that they would need volunteers to help with this project.

Michael Grosberg stated he agrees with the TV idea, but was unsure about the contents. We need to remember to take no opinion.

Bob Jacobson stated that the vision on the project is not to explain what the Finance Committee does, but to show what is going on with the Town, and how cuts have affected the cost centers, services provided, and taxes.

John Nikula stated that the committee might want to consider showing what is State Mandated and then how much the State actually reimburses the Town. The committee should also consider reflecting those expenses that might lead to an override being put forth by the Selectmen.

Michael Grosberg asked who would produce the show. Marty Ragonas stated that they have not yet looked into the technical portions of this process. They just wanted to get an idea of how the committee felt about this.

Bob Jacobson stated he was getting the opinion that the committee was not in support of this. Michael Grosberg stated he disagreed, and believed a couple of people could work on each section. Bill Kneeland volunteered to help, even though he is not completely sure what is expected.

Item 6: Update on Metrics Project with Lincoln FinCom:

Bob Jacobson asked the committee if they would like to continue working on this project or drop it.

Bill Kneeland stated the group has had one meeting, and another is scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 30th. He stated that some of the cost centers are very concerned with what the committee might use this information for.

Marty Ragonas would entertain the idea of dropping this project. There seemed to be a lot of delays getting it started anyways.

Bill Kneeland state he felt the information might be helpful, but was not critical to have.

Item 7: Status of Teachers' Contract Update:

Bob Jacobson stated he spoke with Shauna Simmonds, and she will have updated information at the next meeting.

Laurie Wishner asked if this information was going to be made public. Bob Jacobson stated that it will be. It will be a 2 page report giving a general view of what the data reflected.

Item 8: Volunteer request for St. Anselm project:

Maureen Valente stated that there are currently 13 people on the committee. The topic of the church closing is not to be discussed at the meetings.

Currently, SPS sees some potential use for the property. If this property was obtained, it could eliminate the potential of needing another school. The Senior Center and Park & Rec are both showing some interest in the property. There current locations are very tight on space.

If the property is used for housing, than CPC funds could be used.

The Town will have 90 days to decide on their intentions, once the property is put up for sale. Maureen Valente stated it is not mandatory to go to every meeting the committee has, but an attempt should be made to attend that meeting regarding any financial aspects. The purchase of this property could go to an override question.

Bob Jacobson agreed to receive any emails regarding this topic.

Item 9: Notice of Oct. 4th joint meeting with the Lincoln FinCom:

The meeting will be held at 7:30pm in the teachers' conference room. They are willing to give the committee a tour of the new high school at 7pm.

Other business:

Maureen Valente suggested that the committee should schedule someone from the septage facility to come to the budget hearings. Wayland is having a consultant look at the facility. There is an issue where the DEP/EPA stated the facility has high nitrates. It could cost \$600 to \$700 thousand for equipment, if the septage committee can not prove that they are not the cause of this. There is still 2 years of debt to be paid on the facility.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:15pm.