

**Town of Sudbury - Joint Meeting  
Finance Committee & Board of Selectmen  
February 3, 2005  
Lower Town Hall - 7:30pm**

**Present:**

**Finance Committee:** Co-Chairs Bob Jacobson & Marty Ragonas, Tracy Billig, Norman DeLuca, Michael Grosberg, Bill Kneeland, John Nikula, Larry Rowe, Sheila Stewart, and Finance Director, Suzanne Petersen, and Recording Secretary, Robin Porcella.

**Selectmen:** Chair John Drobinski, Bill Keller, Larry O'Brien, and Town Manager, Maureen Valente.

**Also present:** John Brackett, SPS Superintendent, Bob Milley, SPS Asst. Superintendent, Mary Will, SPS Business Manager, John Ritchie, LSRHS Superintendent, Pauline Paste, LSRHS Business Manager, and Ken Maclean, Fire Chief.

**Item 1: Opening Remarks:**

The meeting was opened at 7:45pm.

Selectmen John Drobinski informed the public that the purpose of tonight's joint meeting is to discuss the potential override that will be voted on. They would also like to hear from the cost centers to hear what some of the potential consequences will be if an override fails.

FinCom Co-Chair Bob Jacobson thanked the Board of Selectmen for agreeing to participate in this joint meeting. He is curious to hear what the Selectmen's views are on the potential override.

Marty Ragonas asked that everyone respectively listen to what the other person might have to say, and to remember that the interests of the citizen's of Sudbury are our top priority.

**Item 2: Discuss & Vote FY06 Non-Override Budget:**

Bob Jacobson asked if each cost center would describe what the effects on their budgets would be if they had to work with a non-override budget with a 1% increase.

Town Manager, Maureen Valente, stated that for the Town 88% of this budget would go to public safety, with the majority going to the Fire Department. The hope will be to keep all 3 fire stations opened for the fiscal year, but it will take a lot of juggling with the budget to do so. There will be contract obligations that will need to be met. None of the capital projects will be completed. Road Repairs will be drastically reduced, and some police shifts will be cut.

LRSHS Superintendent, John Ritchie, stated that the number of classroom teachers is already drastically inadequate, and LS would be forced to cut another teacher with a non-override budget. The school would probably have to reduce the House Office by 1 employee, reduce 3 to 5 support staff personnel, and would also need to make cuts to the athletic department.

SPS Superintendent, John Brackett stated they would be able to cover the utilities cost, but SPS will not look anything like it as it does today. There would be 28 to 30 kids per elementary class,

and the schools would lose support staff personnel in the early grades. If just teachers were cut, the school department would probably lay off 17 to 17.5 positions.

Michael Grosberg stated that he believes the cost centers were straightforward in what the consequences might be, but he is concerned with the potential of all 3 fire stations not remaining open.

Maureen Valente stated that the Town does not plan on closing one of the stations, but if there is an unforeseen incident, that may be the Town's only option. Selectmen Bill Keller stated that no one wants to say that one of the stations will definitely be closed. On paper it looks good that all 3 stations will stay open, but like Maureen Valente said due to an unforeseen event such as a long-term sickness/injury or equipment issues, one of the stations might need to be closed in order to meet overtime costs, etc. Maureen Valente stated that the only way to guarantee that one of the stations will not be closed, is to make cuts elsewhere and all the other departments have been drastically cut the past few fiscal years.

Michael Grosberg stated that Public Safety is a moral obligation, and that Station 3 should not be closed.

Bob Jacobson clarified that he believes that neither the Selectmen nor the Town Manager want to close a station, but that it might be the only possible solution.

Norm DeLuca asked what the implications would be to the police department and if there would be any reduction to the force with a non-override budget. Maureen Valente stated that there would be no reduction to the force, but that 40% of the shifts would be left open, there would be less coverage at night, and some of the vehicles would not be replaced.

**Voted: On motion to recommend the non-override budget. Motion made by Marty Ragonese, and seconded by Larry Rowe. On vote, motion carries 8 in support, and 1 opposed (Grosberg).**

**Item 3: Discuss & Vote FY06 Override Budget:**

John Drobinski stated that the cost centers agreed that the minimum override that is necessary is \$2.7 million, and that includes Capital. He stated that if the budgets were to be funded as submitted, we would need an estimated \$3.8 million override, and that this level of taxation would likely not be supported by taxpayers.

Bob Jacobson stated that there are 3 override scenarios and asked what additional services would be provided/gained by the cost centers:

Scenario A: \$2.719 million override

Scenario B: \$3.75 million override

Scenario C: \$3.2 million override

John Ritchie stated that under Scenario A, they would be able to hire an additional 5 FTEs, and their supply budget would be increased. Scenario C is an improvement over FY05, but it does not bring them to FY04 levels.

John Brackett stated that Scenarios B & C help address classroom sizes. Scenario A will still result in large class sizes. Under Scenario B, they will be able to add 1.5 to 2 teachers and there would be some technology improvements.

John Nikula asked why the benefits budgets did not change from one scenario to the other if there are differences in employee counts. Maureen Valente stated that although additional employees mean potentially increases in benefits such as health insurance, retirement, etc., layoffs will result in unemployment claims offsetting any potential savings in other benefits.

Bob Jacobson stated that the last override approved was 3 years ago for FY03 and was in the amount of \$2,999,995.

John Drobinski stated that we are looking at a structural deficit for next year, and that we have the opportunity to correct it now.

Bob Jacobson stated that the population is growing, 34% of the population is under the age of 19, 52% of the families in Town have children in the school system, all the cost centers are engaged in ongoing contract negotiations, and that all the cost centers have seen drastic increases in benefits and utilities costs. He stated that a \$2.7 million override would be an estimated \$441 impact on everyone's real estate tax bill.

Bob Jacobson polled each FinCom member asking for an opinion on the override scenarios. John Nikula stated he would abstain from voting because he will most likely be moving out of Town. Bill Kneeland stated that it is obvious from the budget presentations that services have been deteriorating. He would recommend Scenario C, since it is not that much different from Scenario B. Larry Rowe agrees with Bill Kneeland, and would support Scenario C. Michael Grosberg stated he agrees with Bill and Larry, and that he believes an 8% increase is reasonable. He strongly supports Scenario C. Norm DeLuca states he supports Scenario C, since compelling cases have been proven that it is needed. Tracy Billig stated she would support an override if she knew it was going to be more than just a one year fix. She thinks \$3.7 is extremely high, so she supports Scenario A. Sheila Stewart supports Scenario B. Marty Ragonis stated she is leaning towards Scenario B, because she tends to be cautious. It also shows the taxpayers we are being cautious. Bob Jacobson stated he supports Scenario C. He realizes it might not pass, but we need to make the repairs now and he feels strongly that it is the right thing to do.

John Drobinski stated he supports Scenario C, because it is the right thing to do for a variety of reasons, including maintaining a sense of community. Larry O'Brien feels in his gut that Scenario B is the right choice. He believes the perception in Town is that not much happens in Town to justify giving the departments so much. Bill Keller stated it is clear what needs to be done, he supports Scenario C. He believes FY07 will be a lot worse, if nothing is done now.

***Finance Committee Voted: Motion to advise the Board of Selectmen to support Scenario C. Motion made by Bob Jacobson and seconded by Norman DeLuca. On vote, the motion carries 8 in support, 0 opposed, and 1 abstain (Nikula).***

***Board of Selectmen Voted: Motion for recommendation of Scenario C. Motion made by Bill Keller, and seconded by Larry O'Brien. On vote, motion carries 3 in support and 0 opposed.***

***Finance Committee Voted: Motion to recommend to Town Meeting Scenario C. Motion made by Bob Jacobson and seconded by Larry Rowe. On vote, motion carries 8 in support, 0 opposed, and 1 abstain (Nikula).***

**Item 4: Discuss Town Meeting Article assignments and speaking roles:**

Bob Jacobson stated that Articles 2 & 3 (Senior Citizen Residential Exemption and Real Estate Exemptions) will be debated, and asked for consensus on whether the committee should give an opinion. After discussion, Bob Jacobson stated he would put a brief explanation together on the FinCom's position and would email it to everyone.

**Item 5: Other Business:**

**Article 11:** (Capital Items Debt Exclusion) both the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen need to vote on this.

***Finance Committee* voted: Motion to recommend Article 11. Motion made by Larry Rowe and seconded by Tracy Billig. On vote, motion carries 8 in support, 0 opposed, and 1 abstain (Nikula).**

***Board of Selectmen* voted: Motion to recommend Article 11. Motion made by Larry O'Brien and seconded by Bill Keller. On vote, motion carries 3 in support and 0 opposed.**

**Article 10: FY06 Capital Budget**

***Finance Committee* voted: Motion to recommend Article 10. Motion made by Larry Rowe and seconded by Marty Ragonas. On vote, motion carries 8 in support, 0 opposed, and 1 abstain (Nikula).**

***Board of Selectmen* voted: Motion to recommend Article 10. Motion made by Larry O'Brien and seconded by Bill Keller. On vote, motion carries 3 in support and 0 opposed.**

On motion by Bill Keller and seconded by Larry O'Brien, the Board of Selectmen adjourned at 9:40pm.

The committee was reminded that all FinCom reports are due on Monday.

The Finance Committee adjourned at 9:42pm.