

Town of Sudbury ~ Finance Committee
Monday – November 20, 2006
Fairbank Senior Center – 7:30pm

PRESENT: Chair Bob Jacobson, Tracy Billig, William Kneeland, Larry Rowe, Charles Woodard, Ralph Verni, and Debbie Zurka.

ABSENT: Marty Ragonas, Sheila Stewart

Opening Remarks:

The meeting was opened at 7:40pm

Item 1: LS FinCom Liaisons discussion of answers to budget guidelines memo:

Bill Kneeland and Ralph Verni presented the responses from LSRHS. The committee was introduced to Judy Belliveau, who replaced Pauline Paste as the Director of Finance for LS. Ralph stated that their job was made a lot easier because of the work/responses provided by Judy. Each committee member was provided with a hand-out showing the responses to each of the FinCom's questions.

Question 1: Provide Information about the status and projected full year cost of all new hiring:

The committee was provided a spreadsheet listing each new hire with their salary and benefit costs. The list was prepared by position; the employee's names were not included. The health costs reflect the 75% amount that is paid by L_S for each employee. John Ritchie stated that they were fortunate this year in the hiring process. They were able to get good employees who came in at the asking salary ranges. Bill Kneeland stated the staffing reflects what was actually budgeted for.

Question 2: Provide the highlights / FY07 budgetary impacts of each collective bargaining unit:

LS has only one collective bargaining agreement that covers the Teachers' Association. The FY08 salary increases will carry a 6.4% increase in wages over the FY07 budget. The cost of living increase for FY07 is 3% and for FY08 is 3.96%. Ralph Verni asked if it is correct that the insurance costs will be rising about 15%. Bob Jacobson stated that they expect it to be 15%, but are hoping that this will be a high estimate.

Question 3: Provide details on grants in excess of \$5,000:

The committee was provided with a detailed spreadsheet showing the name of the grant, the grantor, the amount, description of use, and the likelihood of continuation. Judy Belliveau stated that she expects to see some small increases to a couple of the grants, because they are considered entitlement grants.

Question 4: Provide detail of costs and events which were not anticipated:

The major concern for LS was the number of students who entered the school this September that require Special Education services. The committee was provided with a handout showing the FY07 Enrollment report. Ralph Verni stated that the actual enrollment as of 11/1/06 is at 1,625 students. Bob Jacobson stated that it looks like this is an off year, and that the figures will go down for FY08 and will start going back up in FY09. Judy Belliveau stated that this is correct.

Question 6: Provide information about cost savings / revenue enhancement programs:

Judy Belliveau stated that there are a lot of on-going procedures (ex: parking fees & building rentals). They will provide more information in January.

Question 7: Provide information about upcoming / recently completed benefits program renewals:

LS participates in the Minuteman Nashoba Health Group, and a new bid has been issued for the January 2007 – December 2008 stop-loss policy. They are projecting a 15% cost increase. All employees pay 25% of the cost. Currently they are exploring section 18 in regards to the retirees.

The committee asked if John Ritchie or Judy Belliveau had any questions that the committee might answer. John stated that he did not. He just wanted to remind the committee that the class sizes are still a major concern. Chuck Woodard asked about the matrix for measuring the class sizes.

Debbie Zurka asked that besides A/P physics how many other classes have more than 30 students. John Ritchie estimated between 30 to 35% of the classes. He stated that he does not get many complaints from the parents. The classes are run by good teachers. The concern is the teachers' work load and the amount of time to they can concentrate on the kids.

Item 1: SPS FinCom Liaisons discussion of answers to budget guidelines memo:

Larry Rowe and Chuck Woodard presented the responses from the Sudbury Public Schools. Chuck Woodard started by thanking Mary Will and John Brackett for all of the detail that was provided. Each FinCom member was provided with a hand-out providing answers to the FinCom's guideline memo.

Question 1: Provide Information about the status and projected full year cost of all new hiring

The hand-out provided a detailed explanation of the staff changes. All new hires were included in the original budget.

Question 2: Provide the highlights / FY07 budgetary impacts of each collective bargaining unit:

It was noted that the total FY08 salary budget will reflect a 5.25% increase over FY07, and this does not include new hires.

Question 3: Provide details on grants in excess of \$5,000:

It was explained that the Title 1 grant will continue to be received, but most likely at a smaller amount. The expectation will be the loss of some math support staff personnel. The school is likely to also lose the Community Partnership Grant, which is provided by the state.

Question 4: Provide detail of costs and events which were not anticipated:

Mary Will explained the major impact this year has been the increase in the number of Sped students. There have been 5 students added to this program, increasing the number of Special Education tutors and consulting services needed.

Utilities have also had an impact. The school last year started changing equipment (such as light fixtures) for conservation, and has continued to do so this year.

Ralph Verni asked for an explanation of what "TSA" stands for. It was explained that is a Tax Shelter Annuity. The school personnel are offered a \$200 match if they contribute to a plan.

Bob Jacobson asked if they have considered offering a full-day kindergarten program. John Brackett stated that they are exploring it. It is something that the school committee is continuing to look into. They believe it should be offered to the community, but space within the schools is a major concern.

Question 7: Provide information about upcoming/recently completed benefits program renewals:

The committee members were provided with a hand-out showing the number of school employees in each health plan that is offered. Maureen Valente stated they are expecting the premiums to increase by 14%, but will be submitting a 12% increase for the benefits. There is currently a healthy balance in the Health Claim Trust Account. It was stated that the majority of the employees in both the schools and town participate in the HMOBlue plan. This plan is covered 90% by the Town and 10% by the employees.

Question 8: Provide actual student enrollment growth statistics vs budgeted:

Enrollment is expected to increase at 1 to 3% per year for the next five years. There is currently a fluid number of preschool students, and expect to be closer to 100 students by the end of this year.

Ralph Verni asked why the Noyes and Loring School would have such different figures. John Brackett stated that they try to make conscious decisions, and that they use this projection to help determine the staffing levels that are needed.

Bob Jacobson asked if they look at the new home construction that takes place within the town. John Brackett stated they look at it every year. The hard part is figuring if the new growth will actually have an effect on SPS. They also work on getting the number of homes being torn down and rebuilt.

Item 3: SPS FinCom Liaisons discussion of answers to budget guidelines memo

Debbie Zurka thanked Maureen Valente and her team for providing this information. She stated that some of the info was presented to the committee at the previous meeting.

Question 1: Provide Information about the status and projected full year cost of all new hiring

There have been no new hires that were not included in the original budget. Bob Jacobson thanked Maureen, and stated he was thrilled with all of the information being provided by all the cost centers. He does not believe anyone is surprised by what they are seeing, and is glad to see that all of the FTEs are within range of what was budgeted for.

Question 2: Provide the highlights / FY07 budgetary impacts of each collective bargaining unit:

Currently the Police, Fire, and Supervisory Unions are unsettled for FY07. Usually the police or fire settle and the other unions follow. The police and fire unions are prohibited from striking, and it is believed that they will be settled before June 30, 2007.

Question 6: Provide information about cost savings / revenue enhancement programs

Maureen Valente stated the Fire Department had applied for a \$100,000 grant to obtain supplies and equipment, but have yet to hear whether or not it will be receive. She stated that being a wealthier/more affluent town can work against you when applying for certain grants.

Maureen Valente informed the committee that the Board of Selectmen will go forward in asking for funds for a new police station. Bob Jacobson stated that this becomes a political discussion for the Selectmen. He believes a new building is needed, but the question is the dollar amount the FinCom is willing to support for the new building. John Ritchie asked if there was any type of reimbursement for public buildings. Maureen Valente stated that there is not.

Debbie Zurka asked if Maureen could explain the process in planning for the new police station. Are they looking at things they would like/want or at things that they need? Maureen Valente stated that there are a lot of Federal & State mandates regarding the set up of the station. They realized after the last renovation that took place that the building was just not going to be large enough. The only discretionary thing being added to the station would be the fitness center.

Other Business:

Bob Jacobson thanked everyone for their effort in preparing this information for the committee. He believes it will be very helpful. He ended the night wishing everyone a Happy Holiday.

Maureen Valente stated that the Selectmen will be meeting on December 5th to set the tax rate.

Maureen Valente reminded everyone of the Financial Summit that will be taking place at LSRHS.

There being no further business, the committee adjourned at ????