

Town of Sudbury ~ Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting
February 5, 2007
Flynn Building Conference Room – 7:30pm

Present: Chair Bob Jacobson, Bill Kneeland, Marty Ragonas, Larry Rowe, Ralph Verni, Chuck Woodard, and Debbie Zurka.

Opening Remarks:

Bob Jacobson started the meeting by thanking everyone for their effort, and that he appreciates their cooperativeness. Bob Jacobson suggested that the committee address any questions they have to the public, and then the committee will deliberate.

Sudbury Public Schools:

Mary Will, SPS Business Director, provided the committee with hand-outs.

The first hand-out was a FY08 Budget comparison showing the different scenarios. She pointed out the fact that the substitute line is increasing, for the fact they have a younger teaching staff that is taking more maternity leaves. The \$30,000 TSA Match line is to cover the \$200 403B match that is offered to all employees. The elementary and middle school expense lines have been increased by 5%, for the fact they have not been increased in the past 3 years. Transportation costs are expected to be increased by 5% this coming year.

The second hand-out showed the SPED / Pupil Services Expenses. Chuck Woodard asked if she could explain the SPED Out of District line and why there is a \$98,000 difference. Mary Will explained that there are currently 3 students in residential facilities.

The third hand-out shows a breakdown of the Line Item Expenses. The Extended Year Services line all depends on the number of students who will need to attend summer school. She stated that the Home Tutoring line has been under funded and the schools can't meet the needs of their autistic students. She pointed out that FY06 was a bad year for SPS and SPED. They now use that year as a benchmark.

Town of Sudbury:

Bob Jacobson stated that there is a 10.4% increase in expenses over FY07. He asked that Andrea Terkelsen explain this. Andrea responded by stating that the largest increase is seen in the cost of utilities and the cost of gasoline. Bill Kneeland stated that in Maureen's presentation the utilities equaled \$106,040. Andrea stated that he is correct, and that the amount is broken up in FY07 so that each department shows their appropriate share.

Andrea Terkelsen stated that the dog officers budget will actually go down. The town is going out to contracted services.

Bob Jacobson asked what the town would do with the difference that is shown between scenarios 1 & 2. Andrea Terkelsen stated that they would like to restore some of the library hours, and possibly increase the vehicle maintenance line in the DPW budget.

Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School:

Judy Belliveau explained that at the end of FY06 the school received money from a grant to purchase items in FY07. The supplies and materials line had to increase for FY08, because this was a one time grant from the state for enrollment growth. John Ritchie explained that there was a pool of funds that were available to the districts, but few schools knew about it.

Judy Belliveau explained that if you back out the circuit breaker, SPED is looking at a \$90,000 net increase.

Bob Jacobson stated that there is a \$71,000 difference between the scenarios 1 and 2. He asked what LSRHS would do with the difference. John Ritchie stated he would add an FTE and some benefits.

Bob Jacobson asked the committee if they had any other questions. Marty Ragonas asked if the members who attended the working group could elaborate how the scenarios were arrived at. Bob Jacobson stated that the group started with 4 scenarios. The group went through the numbers and most felt an override should be attempted. No one wants to cut their staff. The Level Service amount came in high but no one wants to fall behind. The Selectmen presented a \$2.5 million figure. The town has been taking a lot of hits in the past.

Bob Jacobson stated that the allocation of the budget would be split as follows:

24% Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School

26% Town

50% Sudbury Public Schools

Marty Ragonas asked if a discussion on an override took place and if so how big of an override. Bob Jacobson stated that all felt an override was needed, but it will be difficult to get one to pass in multiple years. There was talk of asking for a larger override, but the FinCom is looking to provide a fiscally prudent budget for FY08. Sudbury will most likely face the same issues next year. It was suggested to come up with dual budget questions for the override, but the group felt it would not be a good idea.

Bob Jacobson reminded everyone that we need to educate the public. They need to be informed of what will or will not happen depending on whether or not the override passes. This is not a spending issue, but rather a lack of available revenues.

Sheila Stewart agreed that an override needs to be passed. It will be needed to maintain services and staff. She asked if there was any discussion about what will be done in the future if the revenue situation remains the same. Bob Jacobson stated that it was not discussed. The group is planning to reconvene after Town Meeting. It would like to get a group to look at the benefit part of the budget. Benefits are not only a Sudbury problem, but are a problem across the state. Marty Ragonis is opened to the idea of a working group looking at the benefits, but believes more needs to be looked at besides the benefits. Bob Jacobson agreed, but stated that the benefit line is the budget killer right now. The state and the private sector are all suffering from this.

Sheila Stewart stated that she has concerns with the \$2.5 million figure that was presented. Will this get us to a place where we won't have the same thing next year? She asked if the working group had any idea of what the financial picture is when looking at salaries/raises. Bob Jacobson stated that the group did discuss a larger override amount. No matter the override amount, the override will not address all future years' concerns.

Bill Kneeland stated that he would support scenario 2, since this is the closes to level service. He is expecting to go through the same thing next year and maybe the following year. He does not believe the town is misspending the funds, and that we as a town are not getting back to where we belong.

Larry Rowe stated that he supports scenario 2 as well.

Debbie Zurka stated that she supports scenario 2. There has been nothing provided that shows this is a frivolous budget. She stated that the citizens pay a lot in taxes, and this should be put forth to the voters.

Chuck Woodard stated that he supports scenario 2, and agrees that we need to look at the benefits in the future.

Sheila Stewart stated she hopes a group is formed to look at the benefits, and that she is in support of scenario 2.

Selectmen Larry O'Brien stated it is good to see the committee unanimously supporting scenario 2. He stated that they need to work together and get the public informed as to what the budget will and will not do. He agrees with the committee that we need to look at how we will deal with future years.

Jack Ryan stated that it is frustrating to be facing a structural deficit. He appreciates that all of the cost centers and committees are able to work together to get through this. This was a group decision that everyone can work with.

Judy Belliveau suggested the possibility of preparing forecasting figures. She stated that this can be scary, but can be very helpful.

VOTED: On motion, to support the Non-Override Budget as presented. Motion made by Larry Rowe and seconded by Ralph Verni. On vote, motion carries 8 in support and 0 opposed.

VOTED: On motion, to support the Override Budget scenario 2 as presented. Motion made by Larry Rowe and seconded by Marty Ragonas. On vote, motion carries 8 in support and 0 opposed

Article 4 Construct Police Headquarters:

VOTED: Motion to support Article 4 Construct Police Headquarters. Motion made by Ralph Verni and seconded by Larry Rowe. On vote, motion carries 8 in support and 0 opposed.

Article 6 Purchase Fire Engine FY08 Capital Exclusion:

VOTED: Motion to support Article 4 Purchase Fire Engine. Motion made by Chuck Woodard and seconded by Debbie Zurka. On vote, motion carries 8 in support and 0 opposed.

Article 11 Stabilization Fund:

Recommends that \$50,000 of the override amount be added to the Stabilization Fund. Motion made by Ralph Verni and seconded by Larry Rowe. On vote, motion carries 8 in support and 0 opposed.

Article 25 CPF Johnston Land Purchase:

The committee was informed that this article has been indefinitely postponed.

Articles 22 thru 24: CPF Bruce Freeman Rail Trail:

Jim Nigrelli, a Sudbury resident and member of the Sudbury Citizens for Responsible Land Stewardship, requested to make a brief presentation to the committee in regards to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. He submitted a hand-out to the committee members, and submitted an extra copy to be put on the record.

Jim Nigrelli stated that there are still unanswered questions from when this was last proposed at the 2005 Annual Town Meeting. He believes there is a lot more the town can do before spending more money on this project. The money is earmarked and is currently not available. The town may never see funds for reimbursement. It appears that after he reads the feasibility study, it provides issues/problems that could arise but no costs were provided. He believes that taxpayers need to have a better understanding what the actual costs may be. He stated that the Town of Concord is about a year ahead of us since they have already approved the trail. He believes it would be in Sudbury's best interest to wait a year before proceeding, and then we could learn from any of Concord's

mistakes/problems. He requested that the committee take the information he provided under advisement, and thanked the committee for there time.

Bob Jacobson asked if the committee was ready to vote, or if they would like to postpone the vote. Sheila Stewart asked that if the committee was ready to vote if they would do so tonight. Since there are questions on the actual cost of the project, it was decided to vote on these articles at the March 19th meeting.

Article 26 CPF Sudbury housing Trust:

VOTED: Motion to support Article 26 CPF Sudbury Housing Trust. Motion made by Ralph Verni and seconded by Larry Rowe. On vote, motion carries 8 in support and 0 opposed.

Article 27 CPF Amend 2005 Town Meeting Article 42:

VOTED: Motion to support Article 27 CPF Amend 2005 Town Meeting Article. Motion made by Larry Rowe and seconded by Ralph Verni. On vote, motion carries 8 in support and 0 opposed.

Article 28 CPF Carding Mill House Planning:

VOTED: Motion to support Article 28 CPF Carding Mill House Planning. Motion made by Larry Rowe and seconded by Marty Ragonas. On vote, motion carries 8 in support and 0 opposed.

Article 29 CPF Sudbury Town Center Project:

VOTED: Motion to support Article 29 CPF Sudbury Town Center Project. Motion made by Larry Rowe and seconded by Bill Kneeland. On vote, motion carries 8 in support and 0 opposed.

Article 30 CPF General Budget & Appropriation:

VOTED: Motion to support Article 30 CPF General Budget & Appropriation. Motion made by Larry Rowe and seconded by Ralph Verni. On vote, motion carries 8 in support and 0 opposed.

Article 32 Sudbury Golden Age Passport & Article 33 Senior Property Tax Relief

Bob Jacobson suggested inviting Ralph Tyler to the March 19th meeting to see if he would make a brief presentation on these articles before the committee votes. He asked Andrea Terkelsen to send Mr. Tyler an email.

There being no further business, the committee adjourned at 10pm.