

**Town of Sudbury ~ Minutes of Meeting**  
**Joint Meeting – Bd. of Selectmen and Finance Committee**  
**Wednesday - February 4, 2009**  
**Lower Town Hall – 7:00pm**

**Present:**

***Finance Committee:*** Chairman Chuck Woodard, Todj Gozdeck, Jaime Gossels, Bob Jacobson, Bill Kneeland, Marty Ragonas, Jim Rao, Sheila Stewart, and Debbie Zurka.

***Bd. of Selectmen:*** Chairman Larry O'Brien, John Drobinski, and Bill Keller.

**7pm FinCom Meeting:**

Prior to the joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen, the Finance Committee met at 7pm to review a few items. This portion of the meeting was opened at 7:05pm.

Chuck Woodard verified that the committee members have not changed their opinion as to whether or not they would recommend an override. He also checked to make sure that the members agreed with the comments he had listed in his draft of closing comments that were emailed to the committee members earlier in the day.

The committee discussed the spreadsheets that Andrea Terkelsen, Finance Director, had sent to the committee members at 5pm tonight. The discussion revolved around the differences between the revised spreadsheet and the original one that had been sent.

The committee discussed the idea that was proposed about possibly suspending Article 4, which deals with the Budget, to a later date in May. The thinking is there will be a better understanding of the state's budget and the on-going town unions' negotiations.

The committee took a 10-minute break before continuing onto the joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen.

**7:30pm Joint Meeting – Bd. of Selectmen & FinCom:**

The joint meeting between the Bd. of Selectmen & the Finance Committee was opened at 7:40pm by Larry O'Brien, Bd. of Selectmen Chairman. He stated that the purpose of the meeting was to have a discussion in regards to FY10 Budget related items and to answer the question of if an override should be put on the ballot.

Larry O'Brien took a moment to acknowledge the attendance of State Representative, Tom Conroy. He thanked Mr. Conroy for taking time out of his busy schedule to attend the meetings in Sudbury.

Larry O'Brien asked that Chuck Woodard, FinCom Chairman, give an overview of the FinCom's budget process and where the committee is at this point. Chuck Woodard gave a brief explanation as to when the budget hearings were held, and what the committee has learned about the cost centers. He continued to explain the cuts to State Aid that the Town of Sudbury has received for FY09, and what is expected for FY10. He stated that the school's Chapter 70 funds have not been cut by the state. He also explained the FinCom's 4.5% budget proposal and the

affects that it would have on the tax increases in Sudbury. He explained that the committee is no longer considering this budget because of the current conditions of the economy.

Larry O'Brien stated that the various numbers discussed by Chuck Woodard were arrived at with multiple discussions by the cost centers. Statutorily the FinCom must recommend a budget that is balanced & does not require an override. He informed the audience of how the FinCom liaisons work & meet with the cost centers throughout the year. He stated that most of the unions are on three-year contracts that are due to expire on June 30, 2009. Negotiations will be taking place for the FY10 budgets. Health Insurance costs & salaries make up the majority of Sudbury's budget. The mindset is to bring some changes about with the contract negotiations. He would like to see the people involved in the negotiations, on both sides of the table, faithfully pursue adjusting the cost of the salaries and health insurance plans. Because of the ongoing union contract negotiations, there have been some discussions about suspending the budget article at the Annual Town Meeting until a later date.

Bill Keller stated he is inclined to recommend that an override not be put on the ballot, although he not made his final decision. His main concern is the structural deficit. He stated that a salary freeze needs to be considered. Most private sector jobs are involuntarily facing the salary freezes. He is troubled by the idea that the three selectmen are making the decision on the override, since it should be decided by the entire town. He would like to hear as much input from the public as to their feelings on an override.

John Drobinski stated that he is troubled by the struggling economy and the structural deficit. He stated we have a chance to cut expenses and that we need to make the cuts. He stated that he has not made a decision as to whether or not he would recommend an override. He is concerned about the impact an override would have, and where the town is heading.

Chuck Woodard stated that he is concerned about the potential lay-offs. He stated that employee compensation makes up 80% of the budget. He stated that if everyone accepted a freeze in salary, it is likely we could get by with limited lay-offs. He has a difficult time recommending an override at this point, without knowing what the funds will be used for. He is concerned about the structural deficit, and believes things need to change in regards to the contract negotiations.

Bob Jacobson stated that the time for significant changes is now. The town cannot continue to depend on overrides. He has supported and voted in favor of all the past overrides. He would like to see significant changes in employees' health benefits. He believes that employees need to pay more, whether it is higher co-pays or a higher percentage of the premium. The cost of health insurance is a major issue that all communities are facing. He discussed some of the Budget Review Task Force recommendations that are listed on the town's website. Without any changes to employees' salaries and health benefits, he cannot recommend an override without knowing where the funds will be used.

Larry O'Brien stated that they would like to hear from the audience and the people watching on TV. He stated that residents should feel free to email the Bd. of Selectmen or the FinCom. He stated that everyone at the table values the strength of our schools and the value they provide to the town. He stated that if an answer cannot be provided tonight, that they will work on getting an answer and will respond to the citizen.

Beth Winograd (75 Phillips Rd) stated she appreciates the comments that have been made. She knows all people are struggling, and that there should not be a blanket override. Sudbury has been facing a structural deficit for years. She stated that 1,000+ people have signed a petition

supporting an override. People in this town have money and are willing to pay more to support the town/schools. There is a significant difference between people who had kids in the schools compared to people who have school aged children now. The kids in school now are going without things that previous kids had.

Karen Darmer (57 Wagon Wheel) stated that they keep hearing about how the committee wants to wait to see what happens with collective bargaining, and how can the schools make changes to the health plans. Her concern is that the kids in the schools today will go without compared to what the kids in the past or future will have. Bob Jacobson stated that he would like to see structural changes. If an override is to be recommended he believes the taxpayers have a right to know what the funds will be used for. He does not believe that the tax payers should have to continue to cover the deficits by having to pass an override every year. He would like to see changes to the health plans. There can be changes to the plans, with the employees' portion of the premium being increased or increased co-pays for the employees.

Larry O'Brien stated that they have to be careful and speak in general terms when answering questions involving salaries & health plans. They cannot violate the laws relating to negotiations. He stated that the sides can agree to increase co-pays, change the percentage split for the town & employees, or the unions could agree to join GIC.

Carole Zais (36 Old Coach Rd) stated she would like to see information made available on what health plans are offered, how the contract negotiations works, and what the cost of a special election would be. She also asked if the town has looked into receiving grants to help with researching the Superintendency Union recommendation. Larry O'Brien stated that there are state funds available that the group is pursuing and will be applying for. He stated that the March election cannot be moved, and a special election would require an additional \$15,000. The Board of Selectmen is looking into the possibility of moving the date of future Annual Town Meetings to May. The hope is to have an article prepared for next year's town meeting to do. This needs to be coordinated with the Town of Lincoln because of the shared high school.

Mary Mahoney (19 Grindstone Ln) stated that she teaches Grade 8<sup>th</sup>, and that she has been with the school system for some time. She understands how expensive it is to live in Sudbury. The management team in town never seems to suffer. It is always the teachers, police, and fire personnel that are told to make the exceptions. She stated the teachers are buying supplies for the classrooms with their own money. She stated that the job of the town is to educate and provide safety to the public. She is fearful when she hears the committees say "sacrifice". We will lose employees to other towns, because they are paid \$6,000 to \$10,000 more per year. We seem to be losing teachers and firefighters, but not managers.

Chuck Woodard stated that benefit plans worked out with the unions, would be the same ones that would be offered to the management teams. He stated that no one on the committee mentioned cutting compensation. The committee has been talking about slowing the growth of spending. Larry O'Brien stated that a wage freeze would only be a one-year fix. The selectmen's first priority is job preservation. He stated the all parties should keep this in mind when it comes time to negotiate the contracts.

Judith Lytel stated she had sent a letter to the editor in last week's newspaper. She stated that the schools are irreplaceable. The school system has a good reputation, and it will not take long for them to deteriorate. Marty Ragonese stated that the committee does not want the town to lose what we have, but that changes have to be made.

Beth Quirk (20 Scottswood Dr) stated the committee should support an override. The structural problem is going to take years to fix, but we still have kids to be educated. The education that her 3<sup>rd</sup> grader is receiving is different than the education her 5<sup>th</sup> grader got. An override is needed for the short term. Larry O'Brien stated that the selectmen have to decide whether or not to have an override on the March ballot by February 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Board of Selectmen does have a meeting scheduled for February 10<sup>th</sup> where they will hopefully decide. The Finance Committee will be meeting tomorrow night to vote on the budgets they will recommend. As of yet, no override amount has been presented. The board is not sure of an amount or how it would be split between the cost centers.

Larry O'Brien thanked everyone for attending and all those who made comments tonight. The board will take the comments made tonight into consideration.

There being no further business, the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen adjourned at 9:20pm.