

**Sudbury Finance Committee
Virtual Meeting Minutes
March 5, 2025
7:00PM**

ATTENDANCE

Members of the Finance Committee present: Co-Chair Michael Joachim, Co-Chair Michael Ferrari, John Baranowsky, Ryan Lynch, Andrew Sousa, Karl Fries, Eric Poch, Henry Sorett, and Andrew Bettinelli (arrived late.)

ITEM 1: Opening Remarks and Member Roll Call

Co-Chair Ferrari called the meeting to order at approximately 7:00PM, roll-called the members, and declared a quorum present. He read the Municipal Remote Meeting Disclaimer.

ITEM 2: Public Comment

There was no public comment.

ITEM 3: SPS FY26 Budget Hearing

Mr. Lynch welcomed Brad Crosier, Superintendent of Schools, accompanied by Don Sawyer, Director of Finance. Mr. Crosier reviewed his PowerPoint presentation on the SPS FY26 operating budget book.

Discussion ensued including the following highlights:

- Federal mandate to educate students with disabilities provides IDEA grants to support special education students and teacher/paraprofessional salaries are embedded in grant; question on how federal mandate can be reversed/eliminated.
- Third-party company assists in projecting enrollments based on town census, building permits, etc.; hardest enrollment to predict is kindergarten and outreach open houses assist in projecting numbers.
- Vision consultant hired to fulfill mandated services; if position brought in-house as full-time to cover increased need, other benefits and costs will see an increase as well.
- Pupil services growing at a rate of 45% each year; include mostly special ed services but also transportation both in-district and out-of-district; cost of transportation has seen increase of 6% on annualized basis; school committee voted to enter into two-year extensions on three-year contract in the absence of which new contract/vendor would see an 8-15% increase.
- Bus fees were increased two years ago and no increase expected in FY26.
- Enrollment increase is forecast with 225 students across nine grades; depending on class size some of the increase can be absorbed; typically 14 teachers at every grade level with the exception of middle school being higher with choice of electives requiring more teachers.
- Tiers 1 and 2 not included in FY26 budget unless a significant amount of reversion is experienced.
- Comparison data of equivalent towns based on K-8 would be more informative than K-12 data as high school data tend to be different in terms of per pupil spending etc.
- Of the \$911,480 carryover of circuit breaker funds, \$320K will be spent this year and \$600K carried over to next year; estimate of \$1.1M expected next year.

- ELA curriculum request because of significant cost not part of operating budget but presented as a warrant article; doing all at once instead of piecemeal allows for recoup of all savings and provide synergy around professional development and implementation of curriculum across grades.
- However, several changes in elementary and middle school curriculum over the past seven years funded through operating budget.
- Portion of ELA warrant article appropriation goes to a middle school study on how the new curriculum would impact student outcomes in writing and the topics covered; driving factor as state changes standards.
- DESE object codes designate curriculum development purchases broken down by district-wide professional development, consumables and materials, instructional and teaching services.
- Any amount absorbed in operating budget instead of warrant article would result in different choices in recommended budget.
- Circuit breaker funds are key to absorbing the high degree of unexpected costs of special ed with one out-of-district placement costing as much as \$350K; other high costs monitored relate to transportation and rising utility costs; other variable is high turnover in the labor market cross the last three years.
- Loss of federal funds halfway through the year district would not be able to compensate; larger than average free cash fund in unprecedented circumstance would provide safety net.
- Number of English language learners decreasing.
- New MOA for the Combined facilities director position proposes changes with no budgetary impact; the position is renewed automatically unless terminated by vote of the Select Board by December 31st.

Mr. Sawyer will supply the current balance in the bus revolving fund account.

ITEM 4: FY26 Budget Discussion

Follow-up on SPS budget hearing

Co-Chair Ferrari led the follow-up discussion on the SPS presentation, including the following highlights:

- Although the budget to actual numbers for previous years had a small variance, there were material differences throughout the year there were handled in reallocation of line items, with multi-year data showing positive variances absorbed into operations and maintenance.
- Insofar as \$500K in circuit breaker funds were prepaid this year, it is not until the end of the year that it is known how funds were used; important for the FinCom to have visibility and do due diligence in the fall following the budget season on exactly how these funds were allocated.
- Previous year's request for override was due to transportation line item; however, transportation showing a positive variance now.
- Concern was expressed for the curriculum purchase to be funded from free cash; planning for these types of significant future costs could be handled by the town creating a special purpose stabilization fund at town meeting; out-of-district special ed special purpose fund could also be created.
- New position posted is for general government FY25 to cover retirements of Assistant Town Manager and a legal employee. There is no increase in headcount or budget.

Mr. Sheehan and Mr. Garofalo will report back to the FinCom on Monday with regard to specifics on personnel and revolving fund accounts.

Review and vote of warrant articles**Article 10: Chapter 90 Highway Funding**

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Poch and seconded by Co-Chair Ferrari, it was unanimously voted to recommend approval of Article 10 in the amount of \$730K.

Discussion: Co-Chair Ferrari asked if there are any obligations to accepting the funds. Mr. Garofalo stated that the Chapter 90 money needs to be spent on roads and ways accepted by the town and can be used on any road equipment. Monies can be carried over to the next year. This money is not a revenue item in the general fund and is generally a grant from the state.

Roll call vote: Co-Chair Joachim-Y, Co-Chair Ferrari-Y, Mr. Baranowsky-Y, Mr. Lynch-Y, Mr. Sousa-Y, Mr. Fries-Y, Mr. Poch-Y, Mr. Sorett-Y and Mr. Bettinelli-Y. Motion carries 9-0, unanimous.

Article 52: Community Preservation Act Fund – Return of Unspent Funds**Article 53: Community Preservation Act Fund – General Budget and Appropriations**

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Poch and seconded by Mr. Bettinelli, it was unanimously voted to recommend approval of Article 52 in the amount of \$425,346 and Article 53 in the amount \$746,993 both related to the CPA.

Roll call vote: Co-Chair Joachim-Y, Co-Chair Ferrari-Y, Mr. Baranowsky-Y, Mr. Lynch-Y, Mr. Sousa-Y, Mr. Sorett-Y, Mr. Fries-Y, Mr. Poch-Y, and Mr. Bettinelli-Y. Motion carries 9-0, unanimous.

Article 29: Purchase of Fire Engine**Article 30: Ambulance Replacement**

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Sorett and seconded by Mr. Baranowsky, it was unanimously voted to recommend approval of Article 29 for purchase of a fire engine in the amount of \$725,000 and Article 30 for replacement of ambulance in the amount \$500,000.

Discussion: Mr. Garofalo stated that the purchase of the fire engine would be funded by free cash funds and the ambulance by reserve for receipts ambulance fund.

Roll call vote: Co-Chair Joachim-Y, Co-Chair Ferrari-Y, Mr. Baranowsky-Y, Mr. Lynch-Y, Mr. Sousa-Y, Mr. Sorett-Y, Mr. Fries-Y, Mr. Poch-Y, and Mr. Bettinelli-Y. Motion carries 9-0, unanimous.

Article 32: Dump Truck with Plow and Spreader**Article 33: Six-wheel Dump Truck with Slide-in Sander**

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Poch and seconded by Mr. Lynch, it was unanimously voted to recommend approval of Article 32 in the amount of \$146,00 and Article 33 in the amount of \$382,00 both from free cash.

Roll call vote: Co-Chair Joachim-Y, Co-Chair Ferrari-Y, Mr. Baranowsky-Y, Mr. Lynch-Y, Mr. Sousa-Y, Mr. Sorett-Y, Mr. Fries-Y, Mr. Poch-Y, and Mr. Bettinelli-Y. Motion carries 9-0, unanimous.

Discussion ensued on the various warrant articles that will be voted at the next meeting. Co-Chair Joachim asked members to draft the explanatory “blurbs” for the various articles in the FinCom report.

ITEM 5: General Business

- **Transfers and other business**
There were none.
- **Liaison reports**
Mr. Baranowsky – CIAC.
- **Calendar**
Regular meetings every Monday in March.
Proponents for citizens petitions – tbd.
- **Approval of Minutes**
There were none.

ITEM 6: Public Comment

There was no public comment.

ITEM 7: Adjournment

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Poch and seconded by Mr. Baranowsky, it was unanimously voted to adjourn. Roll call vote: Co-Chair Joachim-Y, Co-Chair Ferrari-Y, Mr. Poch-Y, Mr. Lynch-Y, Mr. Bettinelli-Y, Mr. Sorett-Y, Mr. Sousa-Y, Mr. Fries-Y, and Mr. Baranowsky-Y. Motion carries 9-0, unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 9:31PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Martin Barraford
Recording Secretary