

Budget Strategies Task Force
Sudbury, Massachusetts

June 22, 2015

Flynn Building, Silva Meeting Room (2nd Floor)

Present: Susan Berry, Chair, Sudbury Finance Committee; Fred Floru, Vice-chair, Sudbury Finance Committee; Maryanne Bilodeau, Interim Town Manager, Town of Sudbury; Chuck Woodard, Sudbury Selectman; Bella Wong, Superintendent/Principal, Lincoln Sudbury Regional School District; Radha Gargeya, Lincoln Sudbury School Committee member; Patty Mostue, Lincoln Sudbury School Committee member; Ellen Winer Joachim, Sudbury Public School Committee member; Lucie St. George, Sudbury Public School Committee member.

Absent: Robert Haarde, Sudbury Selectman; Anne Wilson, Superintendent Sudbury Public School District.

Public in attendance: Susan Iuliano, Sudbury Selectman.

The Task Force was convened for its first meeting at 7:35 PM by its Chair, Susan Berry, Chair of Sudbury Finance Committee.

At the request of Ms. Berry, all members who were present introduced themselves.

The next meeting date was set for July 6, 2015 at 6 PM.

Ms. Berry, by the vote that authorized the Budget Strategies Task Force, is serving as the chair of the Task Force.

Mr. Gargeya volunteered to be the clerk for the night.

Mr. Woodard volunteered to be the vice-chair of the Task Force. Mr. Gargeya nominated Mr. Woodard to be the vice-chair of the Task Force, Mr. Floru seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

FY'16 Budget Updates

Ms. Berry asked of all the cost centers if there were any developments since FY'16 budget passed.

Ms. Bilodeau covered the staffing for the town. Though we have added some staffing in the last year or so, the Town is still critically short-staffed in many areas. Last year the town added a Program Coordinator at the senior center; however, there is still a need to increase the hours of the Information Referral Specialist. We also increased the hours of the Young Adult Librarian this year; but the Library still needs some additional staff. We'll also need to add a Stormwater Permitting position sometime in the future, as well as possible additional staffing in Public Safety. Staffing in Fire departments has been

level since 1978. She mentioned COLA for FY'16 is still an issue as the contracts with seven individual groups are ongoing. The current contracts goes till June 30, 2015.

Ms. Wong talked about the impact of the LS FY'16 budget on level services. There was a cut of \$125,000 in instructional technology, IT staffing, nurse staffing. There are more sections of sizes of 30 or higher. The following were deferred: offering Mandarin, and increasing the capacity of Building and Grounds, and Business Office,

Ms. Joachim mentioned the start of new full day kindergarten. She spoke of uncertainty of enrollment, in particular, how the enrollment shifts can occur in a particular school or a grade. The contract with the teachers' association is not settled yet. The current contract goes till June 30, 2015.

FY'17 Budget

Looking at the future, Ms. Joachim mentioned the possibility of adding time to school day, with Curtis Middle School having the greatest need for increased time, although increased time across the board would be beneficial. She also talked about the possibility of adding new SPED programs, which require additional staffing and physical space.

For FY'17, the costs would include the outcome of settling the contract. Ms. St. George mentioned OPEB contributions and the need for a data analyst.

Mr. Woodard said OOD costs need to be looked at early and often, as it is a large part of the budget.

Ms. Wong then discussed FY'17 budget. The pressures are the reduction of \$475,000 from FY'16 budget. To meet the reductions, LS reduced \$400,000 from expenses, and used \$250,000 from circuit breaker tuition reserves, with reductions in instructional capital and technology. There are 65 OOD (out-of-district) students. LS is looking to see if some of the students can be brought in house. For this, a program needs to be built that will incur costs, with autism and social needs being two areas that need increased attention. Other areas that need an increased capacity are Business Office, Building and Grounds, Excess and Deficiency and OPEB.

Ms. Bilodeau mentioned the town's initial projections of OPEB normal costs and the reduced amounts in the budget for FY'16. (\$180K total projected cost for town, FY'16 request reduced to \$62,402; \$291K for SPS, FY'16 request reduced to \$131,779.) The town needs to add money for culverts and trees.

10-year history

Ms. Berry introduced the topic of obtaining and analyzing the 10 year history of operating costs, reimbursements and transportation costs to help the town anticipate future costs.

Mr. Woodard said that the town could review the overall cost of OOD and take it out of the overall budget so that operational costs and OOD costs could be looked at separately.

One of the columns in the 10-year history is the population being served; for the Town, it could be the number of households in one case, the miles of roads in other case and so on. For Schools, it is the number of students. Mr. Gargeya talked about class sizes and teacher loads, and how together they give a fuller picture of the services offered by the schools.

Ms. Mostue cautioned against solely using the number of students, because there could be fewer SPED students, but the costs could be higher.

There was discussion about changing enrollment during the school year, and the need for this purpose to agree on specific dates.

Cost Sharing

Ms. Berry introduced the topic of cost sharing amongst cost centers. There was discussion about a shared data analyst between the Town and SPS.

Mr. Gargeya mentioned that a few years ago, SPS and LS school committees jointly agreed to share the METCO director at a time of decreasing METCO grants, so that money could be directed towards student support. LS and SPS worked to align the bus contracts so that both districts share the same transportation provider.

Currently, SPS and LS contract separately for food services, and that is an area that could be assessed for cost sharing possibilities.

Mr. Floru wondered about cost sharing in IT services.

General Discussion

Ms. Wong talked about the relative merits of spending time in gathering data for previous years versus looking to the future and addressing the needs of upcoming years, particularly in light of transitions occurring in the business offices of the Town, SPS, and LS.

Ms. Berry said the allocation of resources amongst the cost centers is not the most rational, and any insight could be helpful in that regard. Ms. Wong said that when you have a fixed budget, an increase in SPED could come from general education, so one needs to look at both.

Mr. Floru said that the reason for looking at previous years' history is to understand which factors at which cost centers accounted for the rate of increase of funding for that cost center. That could help the town and the Finance Committee come up with guidelines that understand the specific needs of each cost center.

Topics for Next Meeting

There was discussion about gathering the required data as to which information could be gathered from the Finance Committee submissions, and which information needs to be obtained from cost centers. All the information is submitted to the annual town warrants, and the Task Force was looking for the data in available spreadsheet format.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adjournment

Mr. Gargeya moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Floru seconded. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM.