

Budget Strategies Task Force
Minutes of the October 15, 2015 Meeting

Members Attending: Susan Berry, Maryanne Bilodeau, Fred Floru, Radha Gargeya, Lucie St. George, Bella Wong, Chuck Woodard

Others Attending: Andrew Vanni, Finance Director; Peter Rowe, LSRHS Business Manager; Elena Kleifges, LSRHS Committee; Joan Carlton, Finance Committee

Chair called the meeting to order at 6:37 pm.

Minutes: Chair received minor edits to the minutes of August 4th and September 1st meetings too late to send out. Motion to approve minutes of August 4th meeting with minor edits passed unanimously. Motion to approve minutes of September 1st meeting with minor edits passed unanimously. Approval of September 26th minutes was postponed.

Budget Guidance Process: Susan Berry went over where the Finance Committee is in the guidance process. Susan also reported that the Finance Committee likes the idea of having a joint meeting with the BSTF or other representatives from the cost centers to discuss the budgets if, once FY17 budgets are received, we are not at a no override budget.

Susan went over the draft Budget Guidance letter that the Finance Committee is preparing and the new piece added to it – the Budget Reconciliation FY16 to FY17 spreadsheet. Questions about the increased OPEB Normal cost to be included were discussed. Also there was discussion about whether two categories for OOD costs, known and estimated, are needed on the spreadsheet. There was a discussion about what cost centers understood as mandated programs/FTEs.

There was discussion of what the FY17 budget submitted by the cost centers should be – level service, level service with mandated changes, budget to do the job the cost center would like to be able to do, where to put needs that are not included in the FY17 budget. The committee agreed that we are talking about a proposed budget – not level service necessarily and may not include all each cost center would like to do.

There was a discussion of what should be in the COLA number for cost centers who have not completed contract negotiations. Suggestions were to set the COLA at zero or show what the increase would be for a 1%, 2%, 3% COLA. A concern was expressed as to how to get a true picture of the budgets without actual numbers for the COLAs.

Budget Hearing Schedule: The Finance Committee has talked about starting hearings sooner so there is time in February to discuss relative priorities of the cost centers and how these might affect the allocations. Chuck suggested using a system similar to what is done in Acton. Susan shared that the Finance Committee likes the idea of having representatives of the Cost Centers working out allocations and the idea of having a facilitator for those meetings. Members of the BSTF asked if the cost center representatives for this discussion would be the BSTF. The Committee; agreed this is a logical group, but the choice would need to be discussed with all the

committees involved (FinCom, BoS, SPS, and LS). The idea would be to hold a Finance Committee meeting to which this group of representative is invited.

The Committee also discussed the need to have more than one meeting. There was general agreement that whatever is discussed at an initial meeting would need to be taken back to the committees as a whole for discussion and agreement/disagreement. Finance Committee will make the final recommendation on the budget, but ideally will be guided by the discussion/negotiation that the representatives work out at the joint meeting.

Cost Sharing Possibilities: Might be worth going back to Dover Sherborn to learn more about the things they share across regions. Although they are not interested in regionalizing the elementary systems, info from them sounded like they share many costs. Maryanne talked about sharing an electrician with the Town and SPS. Bella mentioned that discussion about sharing is more likely to be for an add rather than a consolidation. For instance, SPS and LS both are interested in a data analyst, but that is an add. Chuck asked about the possibility of sharing payroll services. Maryanne explained that this need is shared by Town and SPS.

Public Comment: Joan Carlton suggested that for the COLA, cost centers use 1% for those employees that have not settled so that FinCom has a number. Joan also suggested adding a category that is “needs that are critical” rather than putting these in the “other” category.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn at 8:08 passed unanimously.