

**Budget Strategies Task Force
November 10, 2016
Silva Room, Flynn Building**

Present: Anne Wilson, Melissa Rodrigues, Pat Brown, Radha Gargeya, Bella Wong, Susan Berry, Joan Carlton, Elena Kleifges, Maryanne Bilodeau, Richard Tinsley, Lucie St. George, Chuck Woodard

Absent: Patricia Mostue

Also present: Susan Rothermich (SPS Director of Business and Finance), Sherry Kersey (LS Director of Finance and Operations)

Susan Berry, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

Selection of Clerk: Chuck agreed to take minutes for this meeting.

Approval of Minutes: Pat moved to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2016 meeting. Melissa seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Cost Center Updates:

Student busing: Anne and Bella do not expect the change in the length of the Curtis day alone to increase the cost of busing because they expect to keep most buses "coupled". The cost of busing will likely increase for other business reasons.

Vocational Education: Melissa reported that the cost of Minuteman in FY18 for our existing students as a non-member will be \$370K not including transportation, or roughly \$16,400 per student plus \$4,500 per student on an IEP. There are 17 students of which 12 are on IEPs. The cost of new freshmen students entering Assabet Valley will be \$16,700 per student, not including the cost of transportation. As a point of reference, our per student cost at Minuteman last year as a member exceeded \$25,000 per student.

Draft Budget Hearing Schedule:

Susan Berry presented a draft budget hearing schedule for discussion. The question before the committee was whether to recommend to the BOS that an operating override, if recommended, be included on the regular election ballot at the end of March or in a special election to be held on the first Tuesday after Town Meeting, or May 9. If the former, the language for the ballot would have to be approved at a special BOS meeting likely scheduled for February 15 for a February 20 printing. If the latter, that action could wait until the regularly scheduled BOS meeting on March 21 for an April 3 printing. Susan was concerned that the timetable for a March ballot vote would severely compress the time allowed for budget hearings, discussion of the budgets, and thoughtful decisions and recommendations. Radha expressed concern that a March ballot would leave insufficient time to educate the voting public. Chuck agreed with that concern but suggested a May ballot be recommended only if everyone was confident that the turnout could be substantially improved over the turnout for the May 2016 special election, which was only 1600 voters. Because any override would be substantially driven by a need at the schools the group felt that turnout would not be an issue. Chuck reminded the committee that the original decision to move town meeting back one month from early April to early May was driven by the belief that we would have better State aid numbers and therefore a more

accurate budget proposal if we waited the one month. Having a ballot question in March would basically undercut the rationale behind a May town meeting.

Melissa moved to recommend to the BOS that in the event that an operating override is recommended a special election be scheduled for May 9, promptly after town meeting. The motion was seconded by Pat Brown. The vote in support of the motion was unanimous.

The committee then continued its discussion of the draft budget hearings schedule presented by Susan and, without the need to consider a ballot question at the March election, informally agreed on the following schedule:

January 9: LS and SPS present to the FinCom their no override budgets and, if recommended by their respective school committees, their override budgets for FY18. Susan reminded the committee of her position that Free Cash should not be used to support the operating budget, although the Town had done so the past two years.

January 12: Town departments, the Town Manager's Operating Capital Budget, and regional vocational education budget presentations to the FinCom, provided that the FinCom can field a quorum that evening. Otherwise, the second budget hearing will be held on January 10.

January 19: Joint FinCom-BSTF meeting

January 30: FinCom meeting to receive feedback from cost centers on any proposals made at joint meeting on the 19th.

February 13: Second budget hearing with all three cost centers.

February 16: Second joint FinCom-BSTF meeting, if needed.

February 27: FinCom meeting to vote on the budget.

February 28: FinCom report budget recommendation(s) to the BOS.

March 6: Joint meeting of the FinCom and the BOS to hear capital recommendations from the CIAC and the departments which have submitted capital articles.

March 7: If an override is recommended, BOS vote on whether to put it on the ballot for a special election to be called for May 9.

March 13: Last FinCom meeting before Warrant language and contents are finalized.

March 21: BOS vote on the ballot language for a May 9 special election, if one is called.

Cost Sharing/Savings: Discussion postponed to the next meeting.

Suggestions for Agenda Topics: The following were suggested: financial forecasting; capital budget; and Town Forum.

At 7:37pm Melissa moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Lucie and unanimously approved.