

FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2002
FAIRBANK SENIOR CENTER
7:30 PM

Present: Co-Chair Sheila Stewart, Co-Chair Jim Carlton, Mike Grosberg, Larry Rowe, Don Hutchinson, Tracy Billig, John Nikula and Rebecca Corkin. Also present: Kerry Speidel, Finance Director.

Item 1. Discussion & Possible Action on FY 2003 Budget and/ or Monied & Petition Articles.

Co-Chair Jim Carlton made some brief opening remarks and distributed memorandums from both schools, both dated February 7, 2002. In his memorandum to the Finance Committee, Superintendent John Ritchie stated that he would be able to reduce the FY 2003 budget request by an additional \$86,780. He indicated that LS would like that money to go to SPS. In his memorandum, Superintendent Bill Hurley indicated that SPS had reviewed the different scenarios and has determined that the cuts needed to be made under any of them are too great. SPS asked for support of an additional override amount of \$400,000 for busing.

Co-chair Carlton asked Kerry Speidel, Finance Director, to review the three-(3) scenarios for the members of the audience.

Speidel provided a brief overview of the three-(3) proposed Override Scenarios. The first is a total Override in the amount of \$3,535,552, with an estimated tax impact on the average assessed home of \$588.34. Under this scenario, the Town would be allocated \$906,348 and would still need to cut \$67,132 from the submitted Level Effort Budget. This cut would not require any staffing reductions. Sudbury Public Schools (SPS) would be allocated \$1,727,312 and would still need to cut \$905,711. This cut would result in the loss of 3 – 16 positions, depending upon what is done with transportation. Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School (LSRHS) would be allocated \$789,774 and would need to cut \$223,892. Under this scenario LSRHS would be able to increase student fees enough so that no staffing cuts would be necessary. She stated that at their last meeting, the Committee agreed that they would not be able to support this scenario as the impact to the tax payer was too much.

The second is a total Override in the amount of \$2,971,848, with an estimated tax impact on the average assessed home of \$494.63. Under this scenario, the Town would be allocated \$770,234, and would need to cut \$203,246, resulting in a loss of 3 positions. SPS would be allocated \$1,467,907, and would need to cut \$1,165,116, resulting in a loss of 30.95 positions. LSRHS would be allocated \$661,860, and would need to cut \$351,806, resulting in a loss of 4.85 positions.

The third is a total Override in the amount of \$2,621,653, with an estimated tax impact on the average assessed home of \$436.35. Under this scenario, the Town would be allocated \$664,403, and would need to cut \$309,077, resulting in a loss of 5.5 positions. SPS would be allocated \$1,266,214, and would need to cut \$1,366,809, resulting in a loss of 35 – 44 positions, depending upon what is done with transportation. LSRHS would be allocated \$578,948, and would have to cut \$351,806, resulting in a loss of 6.85 positions.

Co-Chair Carlton asked if a representative of the Sudbury Public Schools would like to address the Committee. Bill Braun, SPS School Committee, stated that if LS would reduce their budget by \$86,000, that they would reduce their request for an additional \$400,000 by the same amount. He also stated that SPS wants to keep their current busing intact.

Co-Chair Carlton stated his concern over the high increase in the SPS budget request. He stated that from FY 1996 to 2002, student population only grew 22%, while during the same period their budget increased 78%. He stated, in comparison, during that same period, the LS per pupil spending only increased from \$9,000 to \$9,100.

Co-Chair Carlton asked if a representative of the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School would like to address the Committee. Lauri Wishner, LSRHS School Committee Chair, stated that she had no additional comments.

Larry Rowe suggested that the Committee members, as a starting point, be polled on support for the \$2.9 million override, the suggested percentage split, and providing an extra amount for SPS as requested. The Committee agreed. Rowe stated that he felt that the losses under the \$2.6 million override were too great and outweighed the tax savings. In his opinion, the \$400,000 for busing needed to be provided and he suggested that a re-allocation of the funds under the \$2.9 million override be made to provide these funds to SPS.

Becky Corkin felt that a \$2 million override was high enough. She further stated that every year taxes increase and services decrease. She asked for a clarification on the status of Fire Station #3 under the different scenarios. Maureen Valente, Town Manager, stated that even under the \$2.9 million scenario, Station #3 may still have to be closed on occasion as she still had to cut \$10,000 from the Fire overtime budget.

John Nikula stated that he thinks that the Town has been cut to the bone every year and that he favors a tiered override. Mike Grosberg stated that he could support the \$2.9 million override, which he equated to an approximate 6% increase. He said that that was not an unreasonable percentage increase to ask for in order to protect your investment.

VOTED: Move that the Finance Committee recommend to the Board of Selectmen that the Board of Selectmen ask the Town for authorization to raise an additional \$2,971,848 in property taxes (Operating Override). On vote, motion carried 7 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstaining (Nikula).

Tracy Billig left the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Larry Rowe moved to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that the Board of Selectmen include an additional \$400,000 in the override amount for the purpose of providing school busing. Seconded by Jim Carlton for discussion purposes. After some discussion, Larry Rowe requested that his motion be withdrawn.

Larry Rowe next moved to recommend that \$86,780 from the LS allocation plus \$56,127 projected surplus (a total of \$142,907) be provided to SPS to offset increased busing costs. The motion did not receive a second.

John Nikula moved to recommend that the \$56,127 projected surplus be provided to the Town to help offset the needed budget cuts. Seconded by Don Hutchinson. Larry Rowe stated that that he would prefer that the surplus go to SPS. Maureen Valente, Town Manager, recommended that the Committee allow the \$56,127 to remain unallocated since it is only a projected surplus and not hard dollars. John Nikula agreed to withdraw the motion.

VOTED: Move to recommend that \$86,780 under the \$2.9 million override scenario be moved from the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School allocation to the Sudbury Public School allocation. On vote, motion carries 5 in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstaining (Corkin, Nikula).

Item 2: Other Items

No other items of business were presented.

There being no further business, the committee adjourned.

Submitted by:
Kerry A. Speidel, Finance Director