

Finance Committee ~ Minutes of Meeting
Thursday, February 6, 2003
Town Hall – 7:30pm

Present: Co-Chairs Michael Grosberg & Tracy Billig, Larry Rowe, Sheila Stewart, John Nikula, Bob Jacobson, Don Hutchinson. Also Present: Kerry Speidel, Finance Director, Robin Porcella, Recording Secretary, Maureen Valente, Town Manager, Selectmen Larry O'Brien & Kirsten Roopenian

Opening remarks from the Co-Chairs:

Co-Chair Michael Grosberg opened the meeting at 7:50pm.

Co-Chair Tracy Billig distributed a handout showing the history of overrides all the way back to Fiscal Year 1991. She also thanked Kerry Speidel for preparing this information in such a short period of time.

Item 1: Discussion & Progress on FinCom reports:

There being no questions, Tracy Billig reminded committee members to reach out to the liaisons, Kerry Speidel, or either co-chair if any questions should come up.

Item 2: Discussion on override budget

Co-Chair Michael Grosberg asked the committee if they had any questions or views regarding an override budget.

Bob Jacobson informed the committee that he had received a handout from the Lincoln-Sudbury High School regarding their position on an override budget scenario.

The LSHS School Committee has come to a consensus that an override amount of \$600,000 total for all cost centers would be a reasonable amount for taxpayers to bear considering the economic climate. There will still be significant cuts with this override amount. The LS School Committee also feels that the override should be distributed equally, with each cost center getting a 1/3 share.

Michael Grosberg asked if the Town or the other cost centers have been shown this handout. Bob Jacobson replied that he would assume so, but is not definite.

Michael Grosberg asked if there was any indication from the Town on their view of an override. Town Manager Maureen Valente deferred from answering any questions regarding an override. Things change, and she has stated / presented what the Town needs.

John Nikula stated he is still against proportionate cuts and/or distribution of an override. He does not believe this is the way to go. He stated we should be putting money away into the Stabilization Fund for future use. He stated the cost centers want all the money they can get, and will not settle for any less. John also stated that Minuteman High School has been receiving phone calls from parents of middle school aged children concerning the technology program being eliminated. He believes LSRHS and the Town need more money, but he will not support an override of any amount.

Sheila Stewart stated she agrees on the numbers, but not the vision. She wants to make sure all the cost centers agree with what the FinCom has decided to do.

Larry Rowe stated he is still undecided. He understands why the Town would get more than a

proportionate share in the LSRHS school committee's proposal, but he does not understand the basis for the school being willing to give more money to the Town. Bob Jacobson stated that they were trying to be fair, and realizes that the Town has gone without in the past.

Bob Jacobson read from a prepared statement regarding his view on an override budget scenario. He did not want to forget any points he had to make, since the FinCom's decision has a financial effect on the Town. Some of the points he reminded the committee of were:

- 1 Pension and benefit lines have shown a huge increase
- 2 Town & Schools are not paid in proportionate to surrounding Towns similar to Sudbury
- 3 The stock market will have major consequences on the budget
- 4 This current financial crisis has caused citizens of Sudbury to lose their jobs, and are pushing seniors out of Town.
- 5 There is an expected 10% State Aid reduction for Fiscal year 2004.
- 6 Special Education will suffer serious impacts for FY 2004
- 7 Town & School salary negotiations are still taking place, and might not be completed before Town Meeting. The FinCom has no knowledge now or before Town Meeting on the negotiations and they will have an impact on the FY 04 and future budgets.

With the above points made, he does not feel he can support an override at this time. There are too many unknowns out there that will have a big impact on the budget.

Tracy Billig stated that numerous people have approached her, stating that she needs to do all that she can to prevent another increase to their tax bill. She stated that the committee needs to represent the citizens of Sudbury and work their hardest to meet the citizens requests. She feels and believes the FinCom should vote no override.

Don Hutchinson stated that he agrees with Tracy Billig and Bob Jacobson. He believes that a pattern of voting in overrides has taken place, and it needs to be stopped.

Michael Grosberg stated he was still a little uncertain, but believes it would be financially irresponsible to vote in an override. The budget overall for the State is a major unknown.

Larry Rowe reminded the committee that there are only a handful of citizens who present their views and opinions to the FinCom members. They amount to a very small percentage of the Sudbury population. He expressed his opinion that the FinCom needs to measure the effects that their decisions will have in regards to the benefits and costs.

Don Hutchinson pointed out the fact that for every senior citizen that moves out of Sudbury, the Town loses \$4 to \$5 thousand dollars. When the seniors leave, they are replaced with families with children that cost the Town \$4 to \$5 thousand dollars.

Tracy Billig informed committee members that she has parents at the schools and other activities telling her "do not raise my taxes".

Bob Jacobson reminded other members that the FinCom is more knowledgeable about what cuts will be and the effects more so than most citizens in Sudbury. We need to listen to citizen's requests, but need to remember the effects and consequences of our votes and recommendations.

Selectmen Larry O'Brien asked the committee to do their best to come up with a vote on Tuesday, February 11th. He stated the Board of Selectmen are putting off their vote until they get the FinCom's decision. He asked that the committee stay as late as it takes to come up with a vote. He would like to avoid the problems that occurred last year.

Item 3: Approve 1/2 of Warrant Articles:

Article 33: Cutting Property

The negotiations for this transaction are currently on-going.
Voted: Report at Town Meeting, votes 7 in favor and 0 opposed

Articles 34 - 37: Land transfer to Sudbury Housing Authority

Most of the properties for this transfer were deeded over to the Town. The properties were in Tax Title.

Articles 48 - 51: Zoning Articles

In past years, the FinCom has not taken positions on zoning articles.

Article 49: Signs and Advertising Devices

Selectmen Larry O'Brien asked the committee to take this article into consideration. He believes this article will sustain the business community. It will allow the business' more opportunity to do what they would like regarding signage. This article will allow for larger & proportionate signage in regards to the size of the building.

Michael Grosberg stated he is against this article. Since the voters accepted the CPA act at the last meeting, why we would the Town allow more signage. The purpose of the CPA was to preserve the historic sites and open space of the Town. By accepting this article, we are working against what residents are paying a 3% surcharge on their taxes to preserve.

Sheila Stewart believes this article does have a financial impact on the Town. We need to keep the small commercial base that the Town has. Companies have complained in the past about types of signage they are allowed.

Selectmen Larry O'Brien stated the road signage would stay the same. Only the signage on the front of the building would be allowed to change. Also, limited window signs would be allowed to be posted.

Voted: On motion to recommend Article 49, vote carries 6 in favor (Rowe, Hutchinson, Billig, Jacobson, Stewart, Nikula) and 1 opposed (Grosberg).

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:40pm.