

Finance Committee ~ Minute of Meeting
Tuesday, January 14, 2003
Town Hall -7:30pm

Present: Co-Chairs Michael Grosberg & Tracy Billig, Bob Hurstak, Larry Rowe, Sheila Stewart, Marty Ragonas, Bob Jacobson, Don Hutchinson. Also present: Kerry Speidel, Finance Director, Robin Porcella, Recording Secretary, Maureen Valente, Town Manager, Wayne Walker, Assist. Town Manager, Police Lt. Peter Fadgen, Fire Chief Michael Dunne, Town Clerk Barbara Siira, Building Inspector James Kelly, Park & Rec. Director Dennis Mannone, DPW Director William Place, and Selectmen Larry O'Brien and Kirsten Roopenian.

Opening Remarks from the Co-Chairs:

Co-Chair Michael Grosberg opened the meeting at 7:45pm. He welcomed all audience members and thanked all the Department Heads for the time they spent preparing their budgets. Tracy Billig thanked Town Manager Maureen Valente for all her help and support the last couple of months. She also thanked Maureen for making herself available to meet in person and via phone for various discussions.

Budget Presentation for Town Departments

Town manager Maureen Valente made this presentation to the Finance Committee. She informed the committee that the Department Heads have attended to clarify or better explain any questions that the Finance Committee might have.

Maureen Valente informed the committee that 0% and 3% budget scenarios have been prepared per the Finance Committee's request. A 5% scenario was not prepared, since it is unrealistic with the current budget crisis. The only item that consists of a 5% increase is in Equity in Collective Bargaining and Salary Adjustments.

Maureen Valente stated that the following topics would be discussed tonight. She also informed the committee that she would not be discussing every department's budget.

- Present 0% and 3% Growth Budgets
- Employee Benefits
- Enterprise Fund

FY 2004 0% Growth Budget

In order to maintain a 0% increase budget, Maureen Valente pointed out the fact that some areas (General Government & Public Safety) in the budget would increase, while other areas (Public Works, Human Services, & Culture) would decrease.

FY 2004 3% Growth Budget

Under the 3% Budget Increase scenario, Human Services would receive the largest increase, since they would take the largest hit under the 0% budget scenario. Maureen Valente informed the committee that the Department Heads trimmed and cut a lot of requests out of their budgets, since they realized a 3% budget increase is the most realistic.

FY2004 0% Growth Budget

The Expenses / Op. Capital line refers to vehicles and Town Equipment used by Town employee's on a daily basis.

0% Staffing Impacts

- No Cost of Living increases, except for the two unions that are in their third year of a contract.
- 1.5 positions (Senior Outreach worker & Building Department position), plus the Economic Development Consultant will be eliminated
- Police Department will not be able to send new hires to the State Police Academy
-The Department has been hiring academy trained personnel recently, but the candidates are not always the best fit for the Town
- Police Department will operate with rolling vacancy again
- Police and Fire Departments may run short shifts again
-This is harder to do when there is bad weather, due to the increase number of accidents
- All contractual obligations are met
-This includes the clothing allowances and tuition reimbursement that union employees are allowed

3% Staffing Impacts

- .5 positions, plus the economic Consultant and Senior Outreach Worker positions are restored
- Police salary line completed, but still no money for State Police Academy
- All contractual obligations are met.
- .5 time for Recreation. This is not a new position, will just be paying the person the correct way now.

0% Expenses Impact

- Hazardous Waste Day will be eliminated again
-Town Management strongly believes that this budget line must be brought back. It is a hazard to be going year to year without this day being available
- Building repairs and maintenance line reduced
-All though many renovations are performed in the older buildings, maintenance is needed to keep them running and safe for the public.
- Utilities expenses are up significantly
- Mosquito control – unable to keep up with the costs. West Nile Virus present
- Nursing Services – unable to keep up with increasing costs

3% Expense Impact

- The hazardous Waste Day is restored
- DPW gets a new vehicle
- Mosquito & Nursing Services are restored

Statistics for Thought

- Educational spending as a percent and total dollars spent is high in Sudbury
- Town is lowest in Police and Public Works
-Town does all of it costs saving here
- Town is amongst the lowest in Human Services, our most fragile and neediest are affected.

Burdens and Risks

- Population up - no new Public Safety or Public Work employees
- More streets, walkways, and playing field. No new Public Works employees
- Library & Recreation use up significantly – very few additional hours added

New and Ongoing Mandates for the Town of Sudbury

Even though State Aid is being cut, the following mandates still have to be completed:

- Storm water rules and regulations
- New Public Safety - SATURN
-A form of terrorism training started after the September 11th attacks
- Record keeping – financial and health records
- Public health Issues

Town Wide Expenses

The following is a list of expenses that are listed in the Town's Budget annually:

- Elections – Town Clerk's Office
- Town Meeting
- Audit – Financial Department
- Financial Software
- Finance Committee
- Town Buildings Utilities – must pay heating and other related costs

Solid Waste Enterprise

- Solid Waste is in OK shape financially, even with a lost grant
- William Place, DPW Director, informed the committee that the Landfill lost a \$6,000 State Grant
- Some residents want to go to Town run curb-side pickup. A committee has been formed and is currently analyzing this possibility

Ending Thoughts

- Not here to make the Finance Committee's job any easier
- Wants to protect the Town from potential cuts
- Keep looking at ways to make services more cost efficient
- Have a Triple A bond rating, and would like to continue to keep it.
- CPA was voted in at Town meeting last year – will be protecting mostly land and historic buildings
- Board of Selectmen have been doing a good job of putting thorough thoughts and insight into the different issues facing the Town

Questions Asked

At the end of her presentation, Maureen Valente stated she would be happy to answer or clarify any concerns that the Finance Committee might have. She also told the committee members to feel free to contact the various Department Heads through out the week if they come up with any questions at a later time.

Tracy Billig asked if a time frame has been set as to how long the Pool would be allowed to operate under a deficit. Maureen Valente stated that this is up to the citizens of Sudbury. Maureen Valente informed the committee that Dennis Mannone, Park & Rec. Director, recently hired a new Pool/Aquatic Director. Maureen Valente stated that she would like to see the Pool running self-sufficiently by Fiscal Year 2005.

Don Hutchinson was concerned that one of the more important issues "Debt Service" does not get look at and analyzed very much. Maureen Valente stated that this was a good observation on his part, and that Kerry Speidel would be discussing this issue more at the Thursday, January 16th meeting.

Marty Ragonas asked about the potential cost of sending a new officer to the State Police Academy. Lt. Peter Fadgen was introduced to the committee. Lt Fadgen stated that it is roughly half of a year's salary, which amounts to \$25,000. This figure consists of over \$1,000 for uniforms and supplies, a couple of hundred for ammunition, and the use of a police cruiser for a two week period.

Michael Grosberg brought up the fact that since the Mosquito control budget is such a small amount, if there is any way it could be brought back in a 0% increase scenario. Maureen Valente said it would be impossible. All accounts have been reduced as much as possible. She informed the committee that some offices are currently working with just 1 full-time employee. Bob Jacobson felt it was ironic to be constantly giving money to support the Pool, but not the Nursing & Mosquito Control when these two items have the greatest health impact on the Town.

Tracy Billig asked about the amount of money that gets allocated to the Finance Committee Reserve Fund. Maureen Valente states that she does a lot of analysis and makes an educated guess. This amount was increased several years ago, but has remained at that level due to many legal issues facing the Town. The hope is that when the cases are resolved, this amount may be reduced.

Bob Hurstak asked about the outcome of the early retirement incentive program. Maureen informed him that Wayne Shurling Sr., a patrolman, from the police Department, and William Waldsmith, Landfill Foreman were the two employees offered this benefit. Both of them accepted the offer and both retired at the end of December 2002.

Marge Wallace, attendee in the audience and former Finance Committee member, requested and urges the Finance Committee that a 0% budget increase be voted on if the collective bargaining talks are not completed before Town Meeting. She does not want to see the Town get locked into a three year contract that the Town can not afford. Bob Hurstak asked if Maureen Valente could comment on what Marge had proposed. Maureen agreed with what she had to say. If the funds are not available, Town Meeting should vote on whether or not to accept these salary increase.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:35pm