

Town of Sudbury ~ Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting
Thursday, January 8, 2004
Lower Town Hall - 7:30pm

PRESENT: Co-Chairs Tracy Billig & Bob Jacobson, Michael Grosberg, Bill Kneeland, John Nikula, Marty Ragonas, Larry Rowe, Shauna Simmonds, and Sheila Stewart. Also present: Kerry Speidel, Finance Director, Robin Porcella, Recording Secretary, Maureen Valente, Town Manager, Selectmen Larry O'Brien & Kirsten Roopenian, John Brackett, SPS Superintendent, Bob Milley, Assist Superintendent, Mary Will, SPS Business Director, Deborah Dixson, SPED Director

Opening Remarks from Co-Chairs

The meeting was opened at 7:35pm.

Co-Chair Bob Jacobson welcomed & thanked everyone for coming tonight. This is the 1st Budget Hearing Meeting being held, and the rest of the schedule is posted on Page 2 of today's issue of the Town Crier. Audience members and schedule presenters were asked to state their names and positions before speaking. Audience members were asked to direct their questions to the FinCom members, and all questions should be in regards to issues being discussed at tonight's meeting only.

Item 2: Presentation of K-8 FY05 Budget

Marty Ragonas introduced John Brackett, Bob Milley, and Mary Will to the FinCom. She also pointed out that there were members of the school committee in tonight's audience.

John Brackett introduced Sped Director Deborah Dixson.

He thanked the FinCom for inviting him to make this presentation. He also thanked the liaisons for meeting with him, Mary Will, and Bob Milley over the past few months. He found the meeting to be useful and informative since the three of them are new this year and it helped to understand what the FinCom's procedures and expectations are. He reminded the committee that when looking at the budget we are looking at more than just numbers, but also the children's futures.

Copies of the SPS slide show presentation may be found on the school's website (www.sudbury.k12.ma.us)

What makes SPS Exemplary: good kids, supportive & actively involved parents, qualified staff, a rich curriculum, a strong focus on early literacy, a commitment to special need students, technology that is integrated into classroom activities, nurses in each school.

Budget Objectives: Balance educational needs of students with desire to be responsive to the Town's financial climate, maintain class sizes, maintain commitment to professional development, look for efficiencies in Special Education expenditures and programming.

Marty Ragonas asked if more could be discussed on the SPED program, especially since 24% of the budget is allocated here. She asked how the school is able to control the cost of this program. John Brackett informed her it was difficult to control cost, because there are always unexpected cases. Right now, the school department is 6 months into their current budget, and they are looking at the possibility of having to send two students out-of-district to educate them. These two students were unexpected cases. In order to cut costs, SPED Director Deborah Dixson is performing intervention interviews early on, to catch any

possible problems that students might have. Thus, the problem is being handle earlier in the Sudbury Schools.

Budget Assumptions: 2005 enrollment is projected to increase by 2.6%, Circuit Breaker is projected at 35%. Negotiations will be starting soon with the different bargaining units. In the last contract, salaries were negotiated for only one year.

Level Funded Budget Assumptions: level staffing, 0% salary increase, and approximately \$62,000 in reductions.

3% Budget Assumptions: reinstate the personnel manager's position that was eliminated a couple of years ago, level service staffing, and a 2.5% salary increase.

John Brackett went over some of the possible cuts/ reductions that could take place in the next fiscal year. He stressed that these are only samples, and that nothing has been definitely decided as to what might be cut or reduced. The samples are so that people will have an idea of how the budget might affect the school's operation & staff.

Michael Grosberg asked who actually manages the benefits aspect of the budget. Town Manager Maureen Valente informed him that the Town is self insured. Blue Cross Blue Shield is the administrator for the Town. A couple of years ago, the Town went out to bid on an administrator. Blue Cross was the most inexpensive, but the employees prefer them over anyone else. To change the level of co-pays, this has to be negotiated with each bargaining unit. The Town negotiates the premium with the insurance providers.

In December, the School Committee adopted the 3% budget.

Before beginning Item 3, Bob Jacobson advised the audience that a two minute would be taken.

Item 3: Other Items

A. Request to authorize deficit spending in Snow & Ice Accounts

Michael Grosberg asked why authorizations to deficit spend was being requested so early. Finance Director Kerry Speidel reminded the committee that the Snow & Ice line can not be overspent without their approval. The budget is 50% used. She reminded the committee that they have approved this before, in past Fiscal Years. Last year, the FinCom approved the DPW Director to Deficit spend, and then a Reserve Fund Transfer was completed in June so that the deficit would not need to be made up this year.

B. Request to approve a Reserve Fund Transfer to Fire Department Line in the amount of \$3,458.

No Discussion

C. Request to approve minutes from December 18, 2003 and September 24, 2003 meetings

No Discussion

Voted: On motion, to approve the authorization to deficit spend Snow & Ice Account, to approve a Reserve Fund Transfer to the Fire Department in the Amount of \$3,458, and to approve the minutes from the Dec. 18, 2003 and Sept. 24, 2003 meeting. Motion made by Larry Rowe and seconded by Shauna Simmonds. On vote, motion carries 9 in favor and 0 opposed.

Item 4: Adjourn

Kerry Speidel informed the FinCom members that copies of the warrant articles were handed out to them tonight in the manila folders.

Bob Jacobson asked Selectmen Larry O'Brien if he would be able to attend the meeting on the night of January 29th to be part of the PTERC discussion. Larry informed the committee that he would be there.

Bob Jacobson asked that the Revenue Discussion be changed from the night of Jan. 26th to Feb. 2nd. Hopefully, the Governor's budget will be filed and a better understanding of State Aid cuts will be available.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:30pm.