

SUDBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes of Joint Meeting with
Lincoln Finance Committee
Monday October 4, 2004
Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School
7:30 PM

Present:

Sudbury: Co-Chair Robert Jacobson, Co-Chair Marty Ragones, Bill Kneeland, Sheila Stewart, John Nikula, Larry Rowe

Lincoln: Chairman John Robinson, Susan Brooks, Mary Garcia, Robert Steinbrook, Alvin Schmertzler

LS School Committee: Mark Collins, Lauri Wishner, Eric Harris, Eileen Glovsky. John Ritchie, LS Superintendent

Sudbury School Committee: Susan Iuliano
Sudbury Town Manager, Maureen Valente

Co-Chair Jacobson opened the meeting at 7:35 welcoming all parties. Those present introduced themselves.

Draft of Budget Guidelines to Cost Centers: A discussion of the draft guidelines to cost centers prepared by Sudbury Finance Committee followed, during which the committee's choice to use 3% and 5% scenarios was clarified. Mr. Jacobson explained that following 2 years of cuts and 0% increases, it was time to project based on increases. The percentages selected might give the committee and the cost centers a clearer idea of what might be needed for a non-override vs override budget.

Susan Brooks, Lincoln Finance Committee, asked when Sudbury would have a better idea of what the Sudbury FC will suggest to the Selectmen for an override. Mr. Jacobson estimated they would know around the end of January. Co-Chair Ragones stated that the Sudbury FC hasn't committed one way or the other and have not established a strong feeling for or against an override; however, the committee does not want services deteriorating any further.

Further discussion followed on the budget setting processes of Lincoln and Sudbury. Lincoln members discussed that they had an override last year. Co-chair Ragones spoke of the cooperation between the cost centers that has been successful in past years.

Other Issues Potentially Impacting Both Towns: A member of the Lincoln committee wanted clarification regarding the way debt is handled in Sudbury. Co-chair Jacobson explained that looking toward the future, the Town's objective is to keep the debt outside the levy limit as level as possible so that there are no large variances to the taxpayer. Susan Brooks, Lincoln Finance Committee, asked Sudbury to keep them informed in the future when they decide to pay down debt that might impact them. Co-chair Jacobson

explained that the decision to do so occurred rather suddenly during the summer months and in the future they would be aware of Lincoln's request.

Eileen Glovsky, LS School Committee, advised that the new schedule for SBAB funding will mean that LS will be receiving their funds as a lump sum, following the final audit of the new school project. She estimates that they should be receiving the funds in FY06. This would save on BANS that would have been issued through FY12 had the funds been received on the earlier schedule. Also, there was a discussion regarding changes presented on October 4 to Chapter 70 that will impact the schools. A decision is required within 120 days, but this can be extended.

Dr. Ritchie stated that enrollment was up by 5 students over the projected enrollment figure this year, but that there are two areas of major concern: 1. There are more than 26 students in the majority of classes in 10, 11 and 12th grade in academic subjects. Although, additional students were anticipated, they have never seen such long wait-lists for classes that students really need to take. 2. The unknown cost of utilities is a big concern. The cost of utilities for the new building is an unknown and will take many months to determine.

Other subjects discussed were Senior Tax relief, Community Preservation Fund and the closing of Hanscom and the impact that will have on Lincoln. Ms. Iuliano reported that the Sudbury School Committee is doing a space study. Three out of four of the schools are crowded. The study should be completed in December and results should be available by the end of the school year. Also, there was some confusion as to when Lincoln elections are to be held and how that will impact any possible override vote. Sudbury Town Manager, Maureen Valente, stated that Sudbury's election is at the end of March just prior to Town Meeting. In the past, Sudbury has put overrides on the ballot both before and after Town Meetings. Lincoln members stated that they believed their elections were in April. It was suggested that the LS District agreement states that the election has to be held on the same day in both towns. Both committees will investigate.

Metrics Project: Bill Kneeland opened the discussion stating that if the information is not going to be meaningful to both Lincoln and Sudbury, the time should not be spent on the project. It was suggested that this information that would include trends, will be useful for developing budgets. Larry Rowe voiced concerns regarding the comparisons that might be made between school systems once the information is published. It was agreed that the study would have to be ongoing in order to be useful. One of the Lincoln committee members stated that the information is readily available on-line, in Town reports, etc. Co-chair Jacobson suggested that all the committees would have to do is organize the data rather than asking the schools and the towns to produce the data. Co-chair Ragonis proposed that the Finance Committees attempt to compile the information without burdening the administrations with the task. The sub-committee, Co-chair Ragonis, Bill Kneeland and Lincoln members Susan Brooks and Pat Phillips will continue to work on a draft. They will look at the calendar and come up with a time-line and will keep the schools informed.

Marty moved to adjourn the joint meeting. Lincoln member Alvin Schmetzler seconded the motion. The joint meeting was adjourned at 9:10. The Lincoln Finance Committee moved to another meeting room for their own meeting.

Sudbury Finance Committee Meeting:

The Budget Guidelines to cost centers was finalized. The accompanying Sensitivity Analysis was explained by Co-chair Jacobson. He asked Town Manager Valente when the overlay figure would be available. Mrs. Valente stated that it would be in December or January before the overlay would be set. Also clarified for the committee was the options for the excess levy for FY05. Mrs. Valente said that one option was to increase the overlay so that the funds can be released for use during FY06, although this has a domino effect and will reduce available funds for FY07. Mr. Jacobson asked Sue Petersen, Finance Director to update and mail the Guidelines and the Sensitivity Analysis on October 6.

The budget awareness project was discussed. Co-chair Ragonis stated that after the last meeting, she had reviewed the slides. She proposed, rather than having a cable television presentation, that the Committee should post the information on the Website. The information would include the Finance Committee's objectives, its charge, a brief history of the last 3-5 years. The timetable would be more relaxed than planning for a televised presentation because the information can be posted as it is updated. The project should be completed by January. Advertising on Channel 8 and in the newspaper will direct people to the website. The committee agreed unanimously to this approach. The committee will define the information to be included and more specifics about the project at the next meeting.

Larry Rowe moved to adjourn. Co-chair Ragonis seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:35.

Submitted,
Suzanne L. Petersen, Finance Director