

Town of Sudbury ~ Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting
Monday – November 19, 2007
Flynn Building Conference Room – 7:30pm

PRESENT: Chair Chuck Woodard, Jamie Gossels, Bob Jacobson, Jim Jacobson, Bill Kneeland, Sheila Stewart, Ralph Verni, and Debbie Zurka

ABSENT: Marty Ragonas

Item 1: Approve Meeting Minutes

There were corrections submitted to be made to the Oct. 15, 2007 minutes.

VOTED: On motion, to approve the minutes of the Oct. 15, 2007 meeting with the understanding that the submitted changes will be made. On vote, motion carries 8 in support, 0 opposed, and 2 absent (Ragonas, Stewart).

Item 2: Transfers and Other Business

The committee was reminded of the Special town Meeting being held at 7:30pm on December 3rd.

Item 3: Special Town Meeting Articles

The committee was informed that the warrant for the Special Town Meeting has been mailed to all residents. The committee was informed that there will be three articles presented at the Special Town Meeting:

1. The Young Land Purchase, which the Finance Committee already voted on.
2. Update the Police Station Feasibility Study – the town is looking to transfer \$10,000 from the police department's salary line, due to the delayed hiring of a patrol officer.

VOTED: On Motion, to recommend to support Article 2 at the Special Town Meeting. On vote, motion carries 7 in support, 0 opposed, and 2 absent (Ragonas, Stewart)

3. Collective Bargaining Funding – if there is a ruling regarding the settlement of the fire union contract, town meeting will need to approve the funding for the new contract. There is a possibility that we might not have a ruling in time for the meeting. The arbitrator's decision is binding.

Bob Jacobson asked if the committee will be able to ask & get questions answered at their next meeting if a settlement is awarded. Maureen Valente stated that they will be able to ask about the financial impact that the town will face because of the settlement.

Bob Jacobson asked what happens if the committee and the town meeting both voted against the approval of this article. Maureen Valente stated that they would need to go back into negotiations and contact the arbitrator. She stated that more & more towns have public safety departments going multiple years without contracts. The town does set aside funds for they believe is reasonable funding.

Jamie Gossels asked if it is possible that they could settle for less than what the other unions have already settled for. Maureen Valente stated that she is very doubtful of that. Once a group settles, it becomes public knowledge as to what they have settled for.

Chuck Woodard asked what the latest possible time the committee would receive the information to vote on this article. Maureen Valente informed him that depending on when the settlement is received, it is possible the committee could receive the info in the afternoon on December 3rd.

Item 4: Budget Hearing Schedule

The committee was provided with a copy of the revised budget hearing schedule.

VOTED: On motion, to accept the amended schedule as provided. On vote, motion carries 7 in support, 0 opposed, and 2 absent (Ragones, Stewart).

Item 5: Town Departments Liaison Report & Discussion

Chuck Woodard started the discussion by thanking the cost centers for the work that they have put into completing the spreadsheets for the committee. He reminded them that they will need to have all of the info to the committee by January 2nd so that the committee may be prepared to ask questions that benefit the taxpayers.

Item 2 on the Report from Town Manager...

In regards to item 2 on the Report from Town Manager, Chuck Woodard asked what “other benefits” referred to. Maureen Valente stated that it refers to clothing allowance and differential rates that have always been in the contracts.

Bob Jacobson asked if any unions had a change to their steps. Maureen Valente stated that the Supervisory Union had a step 7 added for FY08.

Chuck Woodard questioned the turnover in the fire department, and asked about the number of employees that resign. Maureen Valente was not sure of the turnover in the fire department, and that she would need to look into it. She stated that there is the potential of losing one firefighter due to an illness. She stated that she believes most retire. She stated that it is not necessarily the compensation that keeps the employees, but the benefits. She stated that the benefits and the work schedule are good.

Item 3 on the Report from Town Manager...

Debbie Zurka stated that the list of grants for FY08 is half of what it was for FY07, and was wondering if there was a reason. Maureen Valente stated that the majority of them are state grants and that we have to wait until the spring to see what we actually get. Bob Jacobson stated it is possible that the town could receive 75 to 100% of the grants received the previous year.

Item 6 on the Report from Town Manager...

Debbie Zurka asked if the Town would really join the MetroWest Transit Authority not knowing what the benefit to the town would be. Maureen Valente stated that the Selectmen have voted to join. They are looking to double the transit service options to the elderly & youth of Sudbury. Currently the town lacks services for the youth of Sudbury.

Jamie Gossels asked if this is a new program for all towns, and if it is known how many towns are participating in it. Maureen Valente stated that this is a new program for the metrowest area and that there are approximately 10 participating in it. The town will not be paying any additional funds.

Item 7 on the Report from Town Manager...

Chuck Woodard asked if the town could give a breakdown on the cost of insurance. Andrea Terkelsen stated that the system is not set-up to provide an actual cost breakdown in a way the committee is asking for. Chuck Woodard stated that SPS gave a figure, and that he feels an estimate is better than nothing.

Item 6: SPS Liaison Report & Discussion

Bill Kneeland started the discussion by reminding the committee that the school departments work with a bottom line budget, whereas the town's is by line item.

Item 1 on Report from SPS...

Mary Will stated that the school department was approved for 413.37 FTEs for FY08, but right now they have 412.25. They had to start 2 or 3 new Sped programs to meet the needs of some new students this year.

Item 2 on Report from SPS...

The teachers are in the second year of a 3 year contract. Debbie Zurka asked when the negotiations for the next contract will begin. John Brackett stated that they will begin sometime in the spring.

Item 3 on Report from SPS...

Mary Will stated that the school department knew they were going to lose one of the grants, and weren't surprised when it happened. John Brackett stated that they received a 2 year grant from the Sudbury Foundation in order to contract with a social worker. They have also received a grant for approximately \$110,000 to be used for students suffering from autism. This is a benevolence grant, and they do not know how long it will last.

Item 4 on Report from SPS...

SPS is happy to report that nothing is having a negative impact on their budget, and this includes Special Ed. and utilities.

Item 10 on Report from SPS...

The school department was expecting 3,370 students, but the actual count is 3,240. The decline looks like it might be real estate related, but they are having a hard time getting a good read on this. They have noticed that the number of births in Sudbury have been trending down for the last 5 to 6 years.

Debbie Zurka asked that when the negotiations are started, if the school plans on looking into changing the percentage that the retiree pay for their health premiums. Maureen Valente stated the depending on the plan that the retiree signs up for, the retiree is responsible for 50% of the premiums. This was approved at a prior town meeting, and cannot be changed unless the state laws are change. The only thing the town can do is to look into offering incentives for the employees not to take the town insurance that is offered.

Item 7: LSRHS Liaison Report & Discussion

Item 2 on LSRHS FY09 Budget Planning...

Chuck Woodard asked what the impact to the salary line would be due to the settlements. Judy Belliveau stated that it would be approximately \$40,000 this year. He also asked how long the funding should last for the teacher position that is being funded by the grant. Judy Belliveau stated that the school expects to receive the grant each year.

Item 4 on LSRHS FY09 Budget Planning...

Judy Belliveau reminded everyone that the FinCom was made aware of the Special Ed issue at their September or October meeting.

Item 6 on LSRHS FY09 Budget Planning...

Judy Belliveau informed the committee that the school is part of the Minuteman Nashoba Health Group, and informed the committee that they looking into adopting section 18 of the health insurance regulations. Bob Jacobson stated that the town would like to see the school follow through on this.

Item 7 on LSRHS FY09 Budget Planning...

Jim Jacobson asked if they have researched some of the rates they are being charged. The Tuft Medicare plan that we are being charged \$313 per month is much higher than what the private sector is charged. The private sector pays roughly \$80 to \$100 per month. Judy Belliveau stated that she would look into this.

LS Large Class Size Analysis...

Superintendent John Ritchie stated that the teachers feel that they cannot do the work they would like to do. They are not able to work one-on-one with the students, and able to get to really know the students. He stated that the kids do not complain because the large classes are becoming a norm for them and that they don't notice any difference.

Ralph Verni asked if there is any paragraph in the contract that addresses the student/teacher ratio. Jack Ryan stated that there is, but it is very vague. Ralph also asked if there is any data similar to this from other districts similar to LS. John Ritchie stated he would work on getting something together.

Bob Jacobson stated that these figures are kind of scary since a large override was just passed.

Judy Belliveau informed the committee that they have hired a consultant to help determine the unfunded liability for Middlesex Retirement. They are hoping to have the figure in January.

There being no further business, the committee adjourned at 9:50pm