

**Town of Sudbury ~ Finance Committee**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**Thursday – January 17, 2008**  
**Lower Town Hall – 7:30pm**

**Present:** Chair Chuck Woodard, Jamie Gossels, Bill Kneeland, Bob Jacobson, Jim Jacobson, Marty Ragonas, Sheila Stewart, Ralph Verni, and Debbie Zurka

**Finance Committee Meeting:**

Chuck Woodard started the meeting by asking the members if they have an opinion as to whether or not they would support an override, and if so how much.

Bill Kneeland - stated that he would only support an override that maintains level staff.

Sheila Stewart – stated she would support an override, but it would depend on the amount suggested. She would approve approximately \$1.2 million.

Marty Ragonas – stated she would support an override in the amount of \$1.5 to \$2 million.

Bob Jacobson – stated he would support an override, but cannot give a number yet.

Jamie Gossels – stated she would probably support an override, but being new she is not sure how to go about gauging a number.

Ralph Verni – stated that he would support an override, and believes the figures Marty mentioned are good.

Jim Jacobson – stated he would probably support an override, but he is not ready to give a figure yet.

Debbie Zurka – Stated that she is struggling with the numbers right now.

Sheila Stewart stated she called the town of Arlington, who in FY06 voted in a 5-year, \$6 million override. She stated that a lot of good things came out of this, but that they are still facing a \$2 million deficit in FY11. Before this was passed there was a lot of mistrust. The taxpayers passed this with the understanding that no matter what situation was presented, the town would not go over the \$6 million figure. They would have to make do with what they had.

Sheila Stewart stated that Arlington is similar to Sudbury, since Arlington only has a 5% commercial base. They also have the largest allocation for Minuteman Regional. She stated that if the committee has any other questions, she is able to email them to Arlington to get a response.

Debbie Zurka asked if it was known how the \$6 million figure was arrived at. Sheila Stewart responded that they did a five year financial plan, and that everyone in the town worked together to come up with the figure.

Bob Jacobson asked if it was known what services were cut. Sheila Stewart stated that it does not sound like they are making cuts right now, but they are running on the bare amount. Before the override was passed, 8 police officers, 7 firefighters, and some of the library's hours were cut. It also seems as if their student growth has leveled off.

Sheila Stewart stated that she did ask about the collective bargaining groups. She was told that they feel the unions work together with the town, and that they feel sympathetic to voters. Sheila stated she feels this should be something that Sudbury considers. It might be time to stop voting on large amounts each year, and start working on a long-term plan.

Ralph Verni stated that it sounds like you need to do a lot of cuts and suffer through before the citizens might embrace a move like this. It seems we are going to have to go down before moving back up.

Bob Jacobson stated that he would be curious to know the split of the budget between the town and the school. Sheila stated that she asked this question, and that the split is 65% school and 35% town. The committee thanked Sheila for taking the time to do this work.

### **Town of Sudbury Budget Hearing:**

Town Manager Maureen Valente introduced the department heads who were in attendance. She started the presentation by explaining the town manager's responsibility for preparing the budget, and when the town accepted the Board of Selectmen form of government.

Selectmen Larry O'Brien was introduced. He stated that will he answer any questions that the committee or audience might have. If he is unable to answer the question, he will work on getting an answer and will forward the information to the committee. He reminded the audience that this is a collaborative group effort to put forth the best possible budget. The Board of Selectmen does realize that all of the cost centers are willing to suffer together.

Maureen Valente explained the Distinguished Budget presentation Award that is shown on the first page in the budget book. She explained the four key parts of the award budget: Financial Planner, Operations Guide, Policy Document, and Communication Device. The audience was informed that this year's book is over 200 pages. She reviewed a copy of a past year budget page to explain what information is being provided by each department within the town. The town's budget is composed of approximately 30 different departments. She also explained how the town goes about setting goals.

Per Capita (not including benefits or debt) a little over \$500 per resident is being spent in Sudbury. Compared to surrounding communities, the following is how some Sudbury departments compare:

- General Government – spends the least
- Department of Public Works – is the 3<sup>rd</sup> from the bottom in spending
- Public Safety – is the 2<sup>nd</sup> from the bottom
- Unclassified – is towards the bottom

Maureen Valente explained how the town tries to compare the ratio of the employees' workloads in the same manner that the schools show the student/teacher ratios. In 1990 the town's ratio of employee workload as if it were a student teacher ratio would be 19:1. Since that time:

- Fire Department has seen a 50% increase in their call volume
- Police Department has seen a 75% increase in their call volume and a 10% force reduction
- DPW has seen a force reduction leading to a 37% increase in workload per employee

Maureen Valente went over some of the federal and state mandates that the various departments must follow. There are specific time frames and costs are incurred meeting them. She informed the committee that of the fees we receive as payment, only 20% goes back to the town.

Chuck Woodard thanked Maureen Valente for the excellent presentation, and asked if there were any questions from the committee.

Debbie Zurka asked for more information in regards to using the Ambulance Receipts to purchase the new boat and cover the cost of keeping the RT 117 station open. Chief Ken MacLean explained that when they were in the process of preparing the FY09 non override budget, they had to reduce the number of hours station 3 was opened or find a way to increase revenues. He stated that it is very important to note that this will be a one-time withdrawal, and the funds will need to be restored next year through receipts. Marty Ragonese asked if this has been done in the past. Ken MacLean stated yes, or the options are to reduce staff or close station 3, but that both are undesirable options.

Debbie Zurka asked about the DPW's maintenance budget this year. DPW Director, Bill Place, stated that they have a 1985 Mack truck that is going to cost \$3,000 to \$4,000 to repair. They have cut a light operator position that is responsible for hanging signs, and painting the crosswalks. They will probably have to contract these projects out, so it will cost the department more now.

Marty Ragonese asked if there is any limit as to when the employees may take their summer vacation. Bill Place stated that are not restricted during the summer, because they are restricted during the winter months to help with any storms. During the summer months the department needs help maintaining approximately 125 acres of fields.

Ralph Verni asked they had looked into pooling machinery/services with the schools or with surrounding towns. Maureen Valente stated the town does regionalize with other communities, but a good job is not done documenting it. The Police & Fire Department both help cover other departments when needed. The DPW department does share/borrow equipment when needed.

Phillip Connors (resident) stated that he believes the boards are doing a good job of planning for future budget needs, and he appreciates this as a taxpayer. He stated that his home has been broken into before. He believes the police department is doing a good job preventing crimes, but his concern is the residential areas. The department needs to be out and about in the residential areas, but any cuts would not make this possible. Unfortunately it takes something bad to happen before something will be done about the police department budget. He asked if there are any proposals to take the police department up to where most communities are. Maureen Valente stated that they would like to, but that the priorities are started with the Board of Selectmen. She stated that the community needs to make it known to the board what they feel the priorities are and what they are willing to fund. Chuck Woodard stated that Mr. Connors should speak up at the annual town meeting.

The committee to a break before starting the Capital Improvement Hearing.

#### **Capital Improvement Planning Committee Budget Hearing:**

CIPC Chairman, Pascal Cleve, started the presentation by explaining the process to have an item included in the CIPC budget, and what the requirements are.

The CIPC has held three hearing on: 11/28/07, 11/29/07, and 12/18/07

The CIPC is presenting two budgets:

- 1% below FY08 (\$380,307)
- 2% above FY08 (\$394,950)

There were 13 projects proposed to the CIPC:

1. Town Hall painting \$30,000. The CIPC voted unanimously to support.
2. Police Station window replacement \$15,000. The CIPC voted unanimously not to support.
3. Various Building Improvements \$52,500. The CIPC voted unanimously to support.
4. Flynn Computer Room HVAC \$17,000. The CIPC voted unanimously to support.

5. DPW HVAC Study \$10,000. The CIPC voted unanimously to support.
6. Fire HQ bathroom floor \$10,000. The CIPC voted unanimously to support.
7. Fire Station Design Study \$11,400. The CIPC voted unanimously to support.
8. Self-Checkout & Security (RIFD) \$75,000. Was canceled at the 12/18 meeting.
9. DPW Leases (portion of) \$75,000. The CIPC voted 4 in support and 1 opposed.
10. DPW 60pcs of equipment \$129,400. The CIPC voted unanimously to support.
11. Park & Rec (swimming pool) \$15,000. The CIPC voted unanimously to support.
12. Treasurer (tax collection software) \$15,000. The CIPC voted unanimously to support.
13. School (student van) \$22,000. The CIPC voted unanimously not to support

Bob Jacobson asked when the problem with the DPW building started. Pascal Cleve stated that it started right after the building was opened. Jim Kelly (Building Inspector) stated that the problem first occurred during the first winter they were in the building. It began when the fumes from the trucks got into the offices. The construction company went bankrupt that year. The Permanent Building Committee has met with the bonding company.

Jim Jacobson asked if any counsel has been involved. Jim Kelly stated that no one has been hired to do any work. There is no plan to consider outside counsel until they hear back from the bonding company. If everything works out with the bonding company, they might not need the funds from the CIPC.

Ken MacLean stated the he wanted to inform the committee of two articles that will be put forth at the town meeting. One is for the purchase of a new ambulance. The purchase will be made from the Ambulance Receipts fund and not tax receipts. They are currently looking at vendors. The old vehicle will either be auctioned or traded-in. A trade-in would reduce the cost of the new vehicle, while any funds received from the auction would go back into the general fund. They will also be putting forth an article dealing with 111F funds. After police or fire personnel are out for two weeks, the town is reimbursed by the insurance company. Currently when the funds are received they are put into the general fund. This article will have the funds go back into the respective salary account. This article will be created so that it may be presented to the state legislature. Nothing can be done unless it approved by the state legislature.

**There being no further business, the committee adjourned at 10:05pm.**