

**FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2020**

A meeting of the Finance Committee (FC) was held on Tuesday, February 25, 2020. Mr. D'Amico called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT: Howard D'Amico (Chair), Carol Gogolinski, Michael Hutnak (Vice Chair-arrived 7:04 PM), Sandy Kuipers, Phil Landry, Heather Morin, Lynne Mussulli, Dick Vanden Berg

ABSENT:

SCHOOL COMMITTEE: Brett Argall (Chair), Becky Charniak, Kelli Grady

BOARD OF HEALTH: Bob Brazeau (Chair), Kristin Harris (Administrative Assistant)

NON-VOTING: Matt Wojcik (Town Administrator), Jeanne Lovett (Finance Director), Justin Snook (Library Director), Kevin Maines (School Superintendent), Cortney Keegan (School Business & Operations Manager), Nealy Urquhart (Superintendent of Support Services), Cindy Socha (Principal Douglas Primary School), John Bell (Principal Douglas Elementary School), Josh Romano (Principal Douglas High School)

1. MEETING WITH COUNCIL ON AGING:

Patrice Rousseau was not available.

2. MEETING WITH LIBRARY:

Mr. Snook joined the meeting and presented a summary of services the library provided in FY2019 and the budget over the past five years. The total cash value of services provided to the Town was \$680,000 and to the Commonwealth was \$970,000. The Circulation Budget has flatlined the past three years. Almost half of their use is digital, and the Electronic Circulation Budget is set to start flatlining this year.

Douglas Middle School started a Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) Program, which has led to a flourishing of reading as juvenile and young adult materials have increased to almost 25% of the library's circulation of digital collections. The library spent \$4,548 on digital licenses to fulfill those demands, and they have a \$5,000 monthly cap on cost/circ. titles. Mr. Snook is asking to increase the Circulation line item to \$11,725, \$5,000 of which would be reserved for the Schools. Digital loans are taking longer to fulfill than physical books.

The remainder of the library budget follows the five-year projection.

Mr. Argall joined the meeting to speak about the DEAR program. He suggested that the School appropriation could be dropped \$5,000 to fund the library's circulation for the schools.

3. MEETING WITH BOARD OF HEALTH:

Mr. Brazeau and Ms. Harris joined the meeting. The Board of Health is responsible for the Animal Inspector, Nursing, landfill maintenance, and monitoring the wells. Ms. Lovett explained that these fall under the General Fund.

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The Nursing budget has increased as she plans to add more hours next year and the year after due to emergency preparedness. The nurse is currently budgeted for 1 day/week. If she does not work all the hours, that money closes back into the General Fund. Ms. Harris described the nurse's responsibilities.

Ms. Lovett explained the Transfer Station Enterprise Fund.

Mr. Brazeau gave an overview of the Transfer Station. Most of their funds come from the sale of Transfer Station stickers. Stickers are sold only once per year. The commodities market is currently not very good for recyclables, and the Board of Health needs to pay to have cardboard taken away. Transportation Fees are a large expense for the Transfer Station.

4. MEETING WITH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT:

Mr. Argall called the School Committee meeting to order at 7:39 PM. He, Ms. Grady, Ms. Charniak, Mr. Maines and Ms. Keegan joined the meeting. Mr. Argall highlighted how Douglas's school budget and net school spending compares to other districts in the area.

Mr. Maines and Mr. Romano spoke about how the high school promotes itself to eighth grade students and the programs they have added to keep Douglas competitive.

Ms. Keegan presented the FY2021 preliminary budget and summary sheet. She reviewed the budget preparation process. The appropriation from the Town has not yet been received. This preliminary budget represents an increase of 8.12% over the FY2020 appropriation, which is what they feel they need to properly fund the district and move it forward. To just level fund, would be a 6% increase.

Ms. Keegan stated that they are in negotiations with the Douglas Teachers Association and custodial and cafeteria contracts.

Ms. Keegan reviewed the revolving funds. They plan to spend approximately \$800,000 from the revolving funds in the budget. Ms. Keegan reviewed the budget in detail and delineated the largest increases.

Mr. Maines explained that the school district has stabilized and has grown in a very pragmatic manner. They have expanded what they can offer their students across all grade levels. He presented the plan for moving forward and bringing some competitiveness to the district. This budget request is the last of the major incremental steps for the design plan to move the district forward.

Mr. Maines reviewed changes and additions in staff. He explained the new math program, additions to art, music and health programs, DECA Club, E-Sports and community gardens. He presented what has been received for grant support for STEM, 1:1 Chromebooks, and Project Lead the Way.

The district had received \$25,000 from the State to join the Blackstone Valley Education Consortium; they are now asking the State for \$100,000 to continue and expand. Douglas is currently not housing any of the courses for the consortium.

Regarding Special Education, Mr. Maines explained the benefits of team teaching and unified sports.

The district is looking to add an elementary school STEM teacher, a high school science teacher, a middle school Special Education teacher, and a 1.0 custodian.

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Ms. Grady and Ms. Charniak spoke about the improvements that kept their students in Douglas schools and how prepared they are for life after graduation. These changes are expensive.

The net per student Choice-In is approximately \$5,000.

Ways of self-promotion were discussed, such as a media/photography club for students to create ways of self-promotion.

The SC meeting adjourned at 9:17 PM.

5. RESERVE FUND TRANSFERS/VOUCHERS:

There were no Reserve Fund transfers.

6. SNOW/ICE UPDATE:

There was no update.

7. OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS:

New Business: There was no new business.

Old Business: A discussion was held regarding an email response to Mr. Landry.

8. NEXT MEETING DATES:

March 10 – Community Development, Building Inspector and Blackstone Valley Tech (BVT). March 24 – Health Insurance, Property & Casualty Insurance, and Finance Dept. Ms. Lovett will invite Patrice Rousseau to a future meeting.

Mr. D'Amico asked that BVT bring college placement records for the past five years. Ms. Gogolinski would like to see work placement records. Ms. Lovett asked that Mr. D'Amico send an email request to Mr. Wojcik.

9. MINUTES: January 28, & February 11, 2020

Approval of the above Finance Committee meeting minutes was deferred to the next meeting.

10. ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Hutnak made a motion at 9:26 PM to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting. Ms. Morin seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-7.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Wright
Recording Secretary