

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2019

A meeting of the Finance Committee (FC) was held on Tuesday, December 10, 2019. Mr. D'Amico called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

ATTENDANCE:

PRESENT: Howard D'Amico (Chair), Sandy Kuipers, Phil Landry, Heather Morin, Dick Vanden Berg

ABSENT: Michael Hutnak (Vice Chair), Carol Gogolinski, Lynne Mussulli

NON-VOTING: Matthew Wojcik (Town Administrator)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE: Brett Argall (Chair), Lisa Brown, Kelli Grady

ABSENT: Julie Moulder, Becky Charniak

NON-VOTING: Superintendent Kevin Maines, Business & Operations Manager Cortney Keegan

1. MEETING WITH SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES re: SCHOOL BUDGET REQUESTS:

Members of the School Dept. and School Committee joined the meeting. Mr. Argall called the School Committee meeting to order at 7:02 PM. Mr. Argall explained that it is very early in the School budget process, and the information available today may not be as detailed as the FC would like it to be. All projections presented tonight are based on assumptions. The projected increase in the Staffing budget is \$371,000, assuming a 1.5% COLA and steps. The projected increase of 1.8% for the Town's appropriation would be \$244,000. The School is just starting negotiations on their next contract, so it is not known what the COLA will be.

Mr. Wojcik cannot project at this time what the Town's appropriation will be. The Town is expecting an "astronomical" increase in Property & Casualty Insurance premium due to a large claim last year. Mr. Wojcik has built in a 12%-14% increase. MIIA typically does not give the Town its budget until after Town Meeting. The preliminary indication is that the Town will face three years of penalty.

The Worcester County Pension Plan Annual Required Contribution is usually 9.95% each year. This year they project a larger percentage. These variables will affect the Town's appropriation to the schools.

Mr. Wojcik is optimistic about the new self-insured health insurance. Right now, the Town's loss ratio is at 45%, which is very low.

The Town's Personnel Budget is complete.

Ms. Keegan explained that it is very early to be talking about exact budget numbers. All the focus is on the expenditure part of the budget.

Superintendent Maines presented the following programs/staff that were brought in this year: a middle school STEM teacher and adjustment counselors.

Superintendent Maines feels that adding the following items would add the most benefit to keep the district moving forward, should funding be available: a Science

teacher to introduce Animal and Plant Science, a 1.0 elementary STEM teacher, a middle school Special Education teacher, and adding an engineering class.

The cost to send one student to Norfolk Agricultural is \$22,000-\$23,000, which does not include the cost of transportation.

School Choice-In has increased and School Choice-Out has decreased.

The next time the School comes before the FC, Mr. D'Amico would like to see a level-funded budget and a budget that includes funding for the district's "wish list".

Superintendent Maines spoke about the Blackstone Valley Superintendent's Consortium. Douglas hopes to offer an online microeconomics class for that Consortium. Project Lead the Way at WPI offers grants to purchase materials and supplies.

A brief discussion was held regarding the information technology needs at the high school.

Ms. Grady and Ms. Brown spoke in favor of the district not sliding backwards. Ms. Keegan spoke about building stability into the budget.

A discussion was held regarding Special Education, including budgets and out-of-district placements, programming, and School Choice.

A discussion was held regarding the benefits of having an athletic trainer. MIIA may mandate that schools provide an athletic trainer.

It was decided that the SC will come before the FC again on 2/25/19.

Ms. Grady made a motion at 8:14 PM to adjourn the School Committee meeting. Ms. Brown seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-3.

2. RESERVE FUND TRANSFERS/VOUCHERS:

There were no Reserve Fund Transfers/Vouchers.

3. OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS:

New Business: Mr. Wojcik stated that the limiting factor for managing municipal finances is the rate of growth in the town's revenues. Douglas receives a "tremendous" amount of State aid, however it does not grow. The average revenue growth rate for Douglas is 1.7%. The \$228,884 from the Teachers Union of Organized Employees is a 3% increase. This is an unsustainable compensation chart.

Mr. Wojcik explained how the Town's Personnel budget is done and presented the supplemental Personnel budget. The Town will be asking for \$4.3 million for compensation for its employees. This year's request represents a 2.5% increase over last year, which is the smallest increase since 2016. The School Personnel compensation budget is approximately \$8.1 million. Mr. Wojcik asked that any questions be forwarded to him before the next meeting.

A conversation was held regarding Fire Dept. overtime costs, which are reduced by 24/7 staffing.

Old Business: There was no old business.

4. NEXT MEETING DATES:

Mr. D'Amico will speak with Jeanne Lovett about scheduling department heads to come before the FC, however he would like to schedule Fire and Police on 01/14/20.

Mr. D'Amico would like to have someone from the Worcester County Pension Fund board come in on 01/28/20.

5. MINUTES: October 8 & 29, November 18, 2019

Mr. Vanden Berg made a motion to approve the October 8, 2019 Finance Committee meeting minutes as presented. Ms. Kuipers seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-5.

Ms. Kuipers made a motion to approve the October 29, 2019 Finance Committee meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Vanden Berg seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-5.

Mr. Vanden Berg made a motion to approve the November 18, 2019 Finance Committee meeting minutes as presented. Ms. Kuipers seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-5.

Mr. Landry asked to receive draft minutes electronically for review prior to meetings.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Vanden Berg made a motion at 8:49 PM to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting. Ms. Kuipers seconded the motion. Vote: Aye-5.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Wright
Recording Secretary