

Event Details

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Finance Committee

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

Date: February 27, 2024

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: Resource Room

Address: Douglas Municipal Center
29 Depot St.
Douglas, MA 01516

Douglas Finance Committee Agenda

Town Hall, Resource Room

Depot Street, Douglas MA

February 27, 2024

7:00 p.m.

1. Call to order
2. Budget presentations:
 - a. Council on Aging
 - b. Douglas Public Schools
 - c. Blackstone Valley Tech
3. Town administrator report: budget overview, process, etc.
4. FinCom budget discussion
5. Minutes of FinCom meeting, January 30, 2024

6. Upcoming budget discussion schedule:
 - a. March 12: Police, Highway, Fire/Ambulance, Library
 - b. March 26: Capital Improvement
 - c. April 9
 - d. Town meeting is May 6, 2024
7. Open session for topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance
8. Adjournment

Douglas

MASSACHUSETTS

CONTACT

The Town of Douglas

Municipal Center

29 Depot Street

Douglas, MA 01516

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FINANCE COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2024
RESOURCE ROOM

Attendance: Chair Dick Vandenberg, Vice chair Sandy Kuipers, Lynne Mussulli, Ryan Hogan, Heather Morin, Carol Gogolinski, Howard D'Amico, Jeanne Lovett Finance Director

Absent: Mike Hutmak

Dick Vandenberg called the meeting to order.

1. Budget Presentations:
 - a. (0:05 TS) Council on Aging – Patrice Russo the outreach director of the Douglas Adult Social Center, talked about the new bus and what they must do to keep that running smoothly. She stated that the center is up from 2,840 seniors to 5,597 seniors in the past year, the space, and parking and staffing has become an issue due to the surge in growth. She has requested an extra \$5,000.00 for this year's budget in addition to the \$4,000.00 added to the budget request to be able to cover some extra hours for staffing. The state is giving them \$14 per senior and they are going by the 2020 census, which they have only received half of that to date. Ms. Russo stated what the bus is used for and how many days and where it goes during the week, the WRTA did 854 rides for the year and the first 7 weeks their new bus was on the road it did 258. They discussed the possibility of needing to seek additional space or new space for the Adult Social Center in the near future.
 - b. (17:35 TS) Douglas Public Schools – Dr. Paul Vieira the Superintendent of Schools and Courtney Keegan the School Business Manager and they went over their current proposed budget. The things they were able to add to the proposed budget were an adjustment counselor/guidance counselor for the middle school, a Stars and Stripes special education program teacher at the high school, a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) teacher for the primary and elementary school, and a grounds maintenance custodian. They are also looking to add an athletic trainer for the middle and high school. The Panorama Student Comprehensive Data System takes all the student information which includes MCAS, attendance, discipline, grades, bench march assessments and pulls it into one platform for the teachers to be able to access. The districtwide remediation paraprofessional and tutors which has been funded through COVID funding has ended. Textbooks are in the budget and leases for Chromebooks for the middle and elementary that were also funded with the COVID funding and now are 4 years old. The last additions are district-wide wage adjustments for Union and non-union staff personnel. Some of the savings for the year are District wide Special Education savings in tuition reductions in the amount of \$562,419.00, a reduction of three paraprofessionals/ABAs of \$69,011.00, the oil heating bid price reduction came in at \$33,593.00 and then some retirements for a total of \$721,731.00 of savings. The summary page states the total preliminary town appropriation for FY24 was \$15,343,852.00, the FY25 preliminary proposed budget is \$18,444,279.00 and at this point in time with the use of grants and revolving funds to offset in the amount of \$2,863,449.00, which brings the preliminary budget to \$15,580,830.00 and the budget delta at this point is \$236,978.00. So between now and the public hearing next month they will work on reducing the budget by that amount. Both Dr. Vieira and Ms. Keegan stated that they are very pleased with the town and Mr. Wojcik and their contributions and meetings to sort through the budget issues to get them to this point, because the reduction amount it

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the lowest it has been in the 12 years, they have been doing it. They discussed what the new proposed position would entail.

c. (48:30 TS) Blackstone Valley Tech – Dr. Fitzpatrick handed out a booklet for the committee members of the budget to review and go over together. He went through the increases and the revenue from the state. The Town of Douglas assessment number is \$1,848,281.00, the increase from FY24 was \$237,806.00 which is roughly 10% per student. The per student cost for BVT is \$14,940.00. There were a couple of requests from BVT this year being one that the towns create an additional stabilization account to address things for capital projects, the second request is a new roof project that they would get reimbursed from the accelerated repair program 50% and they are asking permission for the right to borrow up to \$10 million and the debt would not start until FY26, the responsibility Douglas would hold is 9.6% of the bond. Dr. Fitzpatrick went over Q&A about the roof project, and the estimated contribution cost to Douglas would be \$68,160.00 if there was no reimbursement amount. The Committee asked for a more detailed outline of the health insurance. Dr. Fitzpatrick provided the committee with a survey that was requested for a 5-year follow-up study and placement of students who graduated from BVT. Mr. D'Amico asked if Dr. Fitzpatrick could explain the criteria for how BVT reviews the applications and makes its selections on the acceptance of students. Dr. Fitzpatrick explained how the selection process has changed over the last 4 to 5 years and the criteria for acceptance is listed on the website as well. Dr. Fitzpatrick will provide the committee with the request from tonight's meeting.

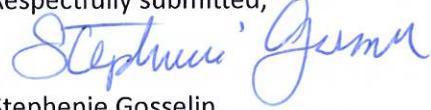
2. (1:52:30 TS) Town Administrator report: Budget overview, process, etc.
Mr. Wojcik handed out documents that are the summary of the largest items that have come up and back up that supports one of the items. The original budget increase percent for BVT of 9.6% will increase to 14.9%, Norfolk Aggie will decrease a little in the budget. He discussed the Planning Board increase of \$3,000.00 and the police increase of \$50k to his initial estimate based on roster changes and other police increase changes. There will be a health insurance renewal meeting on March 6, last year was a good year and this year there have been significantly more claims.

3. (2:17:30 TS) Upcoming budget discussion schedule:

- March 12: Police, Highway, Fire/Ambulance, Library
- March 26: Capital Improvement, possibly Matt Benoit with special articles, time will be 6:30 pm
- April 9: Public Hearing
- Town Meeting is May 6, 2024

(2:19:55 TS) Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Sandy Kuipers, 2nd by Lynne Mussulli. The vote passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Stephenie Gosselin