

Event Details

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Finance Committee

Tuesday, September 26, 2023

Douglas Finance Committee
Agenda
Town Hall
Depot Street, Douglas MA
September 26, 2023

Date: September 26, 2023

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: Resource Room

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

1. Call to order
2. School department budget overview
3. Town administrator update
4. Warrant articles for the Special Town Meeting of Nov. 6
5. Process for the FY '25 budget: discussion
6. Reorganization:
 - a. Elect Chair
 - b. Elect Vice-Chair
7. Upcoming meetings: Oct 10: review and vote on the warrant articles for the Special Town Meeting of November 6
8. Open session for topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance
9. Adjournment

Douglas

MASSACHUSETTS

CONTACT

The Town of Douglas

Municipal Center

29 Depot Street

Douglas, MA 01516

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FINANCE COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2023
RESOURCE ROOM

Attendance: Chair Dick Vandenberg, Vice chair Sandy Kuipers, Lynn Mussulli, Heather Morin, Carol Gogolinski, Mike Hutnak, Ryan Hogan, Matt Wojcik Town Adminstrator

Absent: Howard D'Amico

Dick Vandenberg called the meeting to order.

1. (0:30 TS) School Department budget overview – Paul Vieira, school superintendent, Cortney Keegan, school business manager to present basic preliminary budget needs for FY25.
 - Four new positions – Adjustment Guidance Counselor at the middle school, Stars and Stripes teacher for the high school, STEM teacher for the primary and elementary school, & grounds and maintenance/custodian
 - Technology – They were fortunate to get funding because of COVID to supply all kids with a from Pre-K to 8th grade with an iPad or Chromebook and those are now 4 years old, and they need a funding mechanism to get new Chromebooks.
 - Building maintenance plan – They would love to see a townwide facilities audit done, there was one done 15 years ago when the high school was 5 years old.
 - ASA funds, that were provided by the federal government during COVID which will be done by end of this year.
 - Three contract negotiations this year and next year are the teacher's union negotiations.
 - Non-Union personnel for compensation.

Ms. Kuipers asked if they could provide the board with enrollment numbers going back 5 or 6 years and student to teacher ratio. Mr. Vieira stated that a three-year lease for the Chromebooks would be about \$75k a year. Mr. Hutnak was asking if the Chromebooks are the only technology needs, he stated that at the open house for the school he heard some talk about smart boards not working and computers are outdated. Mr. Vieira spoke about the Stars and Stripes program that helps students up to the age of 22-year-old, there are roughly 4 students currently in the program and about 4 out of district and each student out of district costs about \$100k, so they would like to get a teacher to keep those kids in the school district to save money. Ms. Kuipers asked if hiring the teacher automatically keeps the kids in the district and they responded that the school must demonstrate they can provide the type of instruction necessary to gain those skills so he couldn't guarantee that the students would return but they would at least have the means to try and get them back.

2. (16:45 TS) Town Administrator Update – Mr. Wojcik prepared a presentation upon the request of the chair for where they stand as a town. He presented an overall financial net position of the town and showed from FY12 to FY22 that they have improved the net position of the town simply through financial management. The unassigned general fund balance has improved since 2019 when they had the override to FY22, and this is what the bond rating agencies will look at to determine what the town's credit rating will be. Free Cash has significantly increased from FY21 to current and is currently about \$4 million. Mr. Wojcik went over the Choice in and Circuit Breaker and Ambulance fund accounts. He explained how the town spent the money from the override in 2019. He went over the numbers for health insurance premiums and working rates.

The town is in the strongest financial position it has been in in a long time. The budget forecast through FY2030; major assumptions are:

- Revenues
 - Warehouse development in new growth for FY 2025 at \$1 million.
 - FY 2025 very conservative for other new growth at \$150k – U.S. economy projected to be close to 0% growth.
 - New growth FY 2026 forward at \$200k to reflect increasing of building and housing unit values.
 - Levy growth set at 2.5% per year.
- Expenses
 - All COLAs set at 2%
 - Existing personnel roster carried forward.
 - DPS y/y increase at 3% in FY 2025 and 2% every year thereafter
 - BVT y/y increase at 4.5% every year
 - School bus contract at 5% every year
 - One new FTE at each Police, Fire (EMT per diems @ 70 hours/week) and Highway
 - Health Insurance working rate increases from 2% to 3% each year to cover census changes.
 - Retirement contributions increases at 9.95% every year of the forecast period.
 - Property & casualty insurance increases by 3.3% every year

3. (51:05 TS) Warrant articles for the Special Town Meeting on November 6

The committee will look them over tonight and vote on them on October 10th. Jeanne Lovett went over her budget and spoke to the department software upgrade that will be happening next week. Ms. Lovett also went over other department budgets increases. For article 2 Ms. Lovett wanted to inform the finance committee that the capital committee has not met yet. Mr. Wojcik updated on some of the current capital projects like the municipal roof project and elevator roof project that is going to be a little short due to some extra unforeseen work that needs to be done on the roof, so at town meeting they will ask for the additional funds needed and vote to combine the two projects to save money. He cannot put a bid out if they do not have the funds available for the estimated cost of the project. Ms. Lovett has requested the Principal Assessor, Matt Benoit, and the Chiefs to be at the October 10 meeting when the committee will be voting on the articles.

Ryan Hogan asked Mr. Wojcik to explain the donation money from the developer and how that is being used. The money that was pledged comes in from the developer and goes into the donations account and is used for the paving, if there is excess funds at the end of that project the contract specifies that all remaining funds will be used to satisfy their obligations under the development agreement to buy three or four pieces of equipment for the town's water department. As far as the DPW building is concerned they are looking for a Spring Town Meeting conversation instead of a Fall Town Meeting to be able to explain better to the taxpayers. Mr. Wojcik answered questions about the roads being paved in Douglas, Gilboa and North Street should be paved by the end of this year and South Street work will begin within the next week.

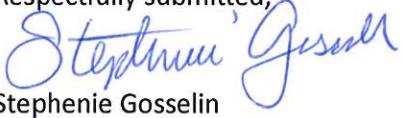
4. (1:25:25 TS) Process for the FY25 budget: discussion: Mr. Vandenberg stated that if anyone has any ideas for the next meeting on how they can make the budget more streamlined and more efficient.

APPROVED
NOVEMBER 6, 2023

5. (1:29:35 TS) Reorganization – Sandy Kuipers nominated Dick Vandenberg for chair and there were no other nominations, all the members voted in favor. Carol Gogolinski nominated Sandy Kuipers for vice chair, all the members voted in favor.
6. (1:32:10 TS) Upcoming Meetings: October 10, 2023 and maybe one more meeting in December. Ms. Lovett stated the changes that she knows will need to be made to the articles.

(1:35:10 TS) Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Mike Hutnak, 2nd by Lynne Mussulli. The vote passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Stephenie Gosselin