

FINANCE COMMITTEE
Town of Becket
557 Main Street
Becket, MA 01223

Meeting minutes of November 20, 2013

Finance Committee Members present: Maria Wallington, Ann Spadafora, Stephen LaBelle, Jeremy Dunn, Dan Parnell

Others Present: Jeanne Pryor-Selectman, Bill Elovirta-Selectman, Angela Hilton-Selectman Ed Gibson, Nina Weiler, Mark Karlberg, Robert Ronzio, Colleen O'Connor, John Les, Dr. William Cameron, Melissa Falkowski, Chris Bouchard

Steve LaBelle called the Finance Committee meeting to order.

The Central Berkshire Regional School District Administration met with the Board and Finance Committee to discuss planning for the FY 2015 budget. Dr. Cameron, School Superintendent, advised that since he has been the superintendent, he has tried to meet with all of the district towns to see what their concerns and interests were for the upcoming fiscal year before the budget process started. He also stated that he was here to answer any questions the boards may have or the general public may have. He advised that the school committee has set up a budget schedule and the school committee has asked for his preliminary budget by January 9, 2014 and his final budget by the middle of March. He asked the Boards if they had any questions. Jeanne's biggest concern was the assessment issue. Dr. Cameron advised that based on the information the school district had when they put its budget together was different from the final state budget. The governor changed how the towns that belonged to school districts were assessed. Chapter 71, section 16 states that the assessments that are voted on at the annual town meetings for all of the towns in the district cannot be changed unless a majority of the towns in the district vote to accept the changes including the towns whose assessments would be going up. This did not happen so the original assessments stayed the same. He was not sure how this could be changed so that this does not happen again. He advised that there is a proposal that the legislature has made that would require the legislature to vote early in the budget process on school budgets so only the school's budget would not change once the final budget was approved. This might help but it is only a proposal and has not been enacted. Bill asked if the formula for the towns in the school district changed. Melissa Falkowski, the CBRSD Business Administrator, explained that the formula did not change, but it had to do with the target contributions. Some towns are below its target contributions and some are above its target contributions. The legislature is trying to get every town to be at its proper target contribution. She explained how the target contributions are assessed that is based partly on real estate valuation and the growth factor. Jeremy asked Dr. Cameron if he could give an estimate of how much the school budget might increase so the town could start preparing its budget. Dr. Cameron did not have all of the information but gave some examples of what the school would be looking to improve and the approximate costs for these items. He did advise that they are working very hard to keep the budget from increasing too much because they know that the

school district's enrollment is dropping like most districts in Berkshire County and the towns are struggling with their own budgets. Ed asked Dr. Cameron what the projected enrollment for CBRSD and for Becket Washington School would be. He did not think there would be a big drop for the whole district and for Becket Washington School. Ed also asked him if the school received grant funding for security systems for the schools. Dr. Cameron advised that CBRSD did not receive grant funding for this but all of the towns in the district voted to incur cost for district wide building security improvements so they are moving ahead with this. Briefly discussed autism programs at the school. Dr. Cameron advised that the district does not currently have any students in the autism spectrum going to schools outside the district and that they are continually striving to improve the autism program. John Les, one of Becket's representatives on the school committee, advised that since Mike Falk resigned from the school committee, they are still looking for his replacement. No one has come forward as of yet but he would like the Selectmen to see if they could find someone to fill this vacancy. Jeanne thanked everyone for coming to this meeting.

7:40 PM Maria Wallington motioned to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting, Ann Spadafora seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Nina Weiler

Approved by Steve LaBelle, Chair

