



TOWN OF DARTMOUTH MASSACHUSETTS

Finance Committee
400 Slocum Road
Dartmouth, MA 02747
Phone (508) 910-1802
Fax (508) 910-1885

Shannon Jenkins, Chair
Mary Louise Nunes, Vice-Chair
Stephen Mitchell, Clerk

Pursuant to a call to order and notice duly given in the manner required by law and the By-laws of the Town of Dartmouth, a meeting of the Finance Committee was held on, February 18th, 2010 at 6:30P.M. at the Dartmouth Town Hall, Room 305.

Members Present: Peter Friedman, Greg Lynam, Stephen Mitchell, David Ferreira; Shannon Jenkins, Jason Wentworth, Patrick Roth, Barry Walker, Mary Louise Nunes

Members Absent:

Other town officials present;

Dr. Stephen Russell, Superintendent of Schools,
Ana Reilly, Asst. Superintendent of Schools
Manuel Cordeiro; School Department Business Manager
Greg Jones; School Committee Member
Joseph Michaud; Chair of Select Board

Pledge of Allegiance / Agenda Overview

Open Discussion and Forum RE: Full Day Kindergarten (FDK)

Dr. Russell provided a general overview of full day kindergarten. Mr. Russell reference a memo and School Capital Improvement Plan handout as an aide.

There have been 2 public forums with good public attendance. The FDK plan is still in process. The School Department would like to engage the FinCom for a discussion, feedback and consultation about plan implementation.

Dr. Russell cited a potential revenue turn-back proposal is currently in review - to share the load of cost and lock funding directly into DK support only. Dr. Russell also stated that Foundation Aid is a factor in the FDK formula For example - \$333K to be garnered in year 2 – \$272K

Discussion of MNS (*Minimum Net School Spending*)–

Greg Jones was seeking clarification on the local contribution. He wanted to be sure that there were no more additional monies required above MNS for FDK. **The consensus was to coordinate a conference call with Mr. Hatch with the DOE.**

David Cressman, Town Administrator, cited Vocational School enrollment can affect and will most likely the shift the calculation of MNS and in-turn affect the funding toward start up cost of FDK.

Peter Friedman stated that the town is above MNS. The \$272K – that town is showing that we already paying that and questions where is the money coming from.

Mary Louise cited that the \$500K that was set aside would be a tough sell to have TM approve funding.

Dr. Russell states that he is simply trying to illustrate realistically what we are working with.

Shannon Jenkins reminded everyone that \$230K is already in the Schedule A as a line item reserve for operating costs.

Greg Jones offered that town officials need to lay out the proposal clearly so we can communicate to Town Meeting.

Greg Lyman said that we first need to determine is reaching FDK is a top priority. If so leadership needs to state a clear and defined vision that this direction for our town. He continued to say that FinCom serves to support the goals set by Select Board. He maintains that the School Committee must first say that this is the most important priority of the schools and lay out the benefits to the town. Then the Select Board and the FinCom works out the plan within budget that is sustainable for the long-term.

Dr. Russell reminded everyone that next Tuesday night is a joint meeting –

Peter Friedman offered that the meals tax coming in of \$550K is not unreasonable to assume that the town priority would that ½ of go to the new start of FDK.

The FDK committee meetings stated in their research of the proposal that the schools with ante up as well for this within their budget. What mechanisms can be created?

Joe Michaud, Chair of Select Board cited that a sliding scale tuition as a possible funding mechanism and reminded everyone that if we do FDK that the town will receive Foundation money from the State.

Greg Jones added that the reports from teachers in the pilot program are showing significant differences in student performance between pilot program FDK children and the current half-day children.

Manny Cordeiro, School Business Manager, offered that the end of year turn-back concept into a savings account that would designated for the specific purpose of FDK.

David Ferreira asked if turn-back dollars coming at end of year could be used. The answer was, YES it could if Town Meeting appropriates it to the line item.

Stephen Mitchell asks what was the School Department and School Committee's biggest concern. Dr. Russell stated that actual funding haunts them but watching 80% of all of the school departments in the Commonwealth with FDK shows it can be done. He further stated that a continued review of the school department budget is key to the overall process as well.

Jason Wentworth asked if three years of education result data is enough to show the benefits of FDK to a town with 80% of towns implementing FDK?

Ana Reilly, Asst. Superintendent of Schools, stated that three years is more than enough to collect the data.

Joe Michaud added that politics will play a part in how the Town can sustain FDK. Public perception will be key to FDK success.

Greg Jones added that the School Committee is not looking for override money for this program and suggests revenue sources such as the meal tax is a funding source. This is a good program that can show tangible results.

Discussion of the budget

Shannon Jenkins said that we have the budget requests from the Department Heads. Our goal as a FinCom is to set realistic projections and forecast by working with each Head of the Departments within a defined budget process.

David Cressman addressed the \$717K deficit we see on the budget sheet. He said we could quickly bring this number down. He stated he had a conversation with David Bear with the MMA to get his sense. Mr. Bear told Mr. Cressman that he has been surprised there has been little negativity regarding budget cuts. He went on to tell Mr. Cressman that he feels it may 5% lower or in fact, level funded. This could result in a \$400K swing. Local Aid resolution will occur in March. Our current numbers on the Budget Report can provide as a basis by which to start. He suggested the Town continue to work with the low number but asked Greg Lyman to open the worksheet to add columns to it in order to start knocking down items that will stay within the budget.

Snow Budget - A bit over-spent right now. We need to clarify where it is in budget and if there is a REVENUE OFFSET?

The Ambulance Contract was noted as being settled for another year.

Stephen Mitchell suggested that the budget strategy needs to be presented to all departments as a level funded budget and to plan accordingly.

Reserve Fund discussion

David Cressman, suggested that the Town hold the reserve fund as much as possible but there could be an amount that can be used.

Turn-back money is a factor in the Bond Rating – One reason Dartmouth had a favorable bond rating was because of the good operating reserve. Discussion about lowering reserve fund and move funds to other line items in need of possible funding.

FinCom reviewed the budget line items individually and had a conversation on whether or not some could be adjusted lower immediately and could others use the Reserve Fund as an appropriation amount.

Discussion about the Healthcare Plan in town. Experience drives the cost. External costs among drug companies and hospitals. They will pass cost to the consumer

Discussion of schedule next week regarding joint meeting – expect level funding – requests can be brought to us on a case by case basis.

Motion made by Stephen to Adjourn
2nd: David Ferreira
VOTE 9-0-0

Stephen D. Mitchell
Clerk