



**OFFICE OF THE
Advisory Board
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March 20, 2017

Present: Amie Stevens, Harold Simmons, Christine Muir, Dana Metzler, Pam Crocker, Ron Mikol
Also present: Tracey Hutton

Christine opened the meeting at 7:05.

- Main topic is to discuss the budget and options to close deficit.
- Tracey put together an FY18 proposed budget overview.
 - There are three scenarios that DO NOT include the warrant articles. The dollar amounts below are the deficit if the GDRSD is funded as described.
 - \$81,014=full fund of schools with the override. School committee proposed budget.
 - \$39,794=fund the school at 60%.
 - \$54,122=superintendent's budget
 - Ron asked how the COLA is factored in to the overall budget.
 - COLA cost is \$15,862 and the personal board recommendations cost is \$33,945.
 - He asked if the personnel board recommendations aren't viable this year what would the difference look like.
 - Dana suggested we may look to not offer COLA raises but still offer personnel recommendations.
 - Harold asked when Groton Fincom is voting on their budget.
 - Christine mentioned Groton FinCom are discussing options this week. Their public hearing was the same evening as our meeting.
 - Next Wed, the 29th, the SC is coming in to talk with Dunstable Fincom and Selectman.
 - Pam asked if 60% is typically what we give to the schools of Dunstable's new money. It is.
 - Dunstable's assessment went up \$158K due to increase of 13 students in Dunstable.
 - The student population is shifting due to families moving into existing and new homes in Dunstable.
 - If the new regional agreement is approved, we would take a 5 year rolling average of the student population rather than look at each year separately.
 - Dana suggested that we should look to adopt the superintendent's budget.
 - Pam asked what the budgets address, i.e. does it address capital needs etc?
 - Technology, HVAC at high school and Boutwell capital needs are all included in the superintendents budget.
 - Christine stated that if we use the superintendents number with a deficit of \$54,122, we should consider using free cash. Supports the COLA and personnel increases.

- Ron suggested that we should not use free cash to close the deficit and wean the town off of using free cash to close the deficit.
 - Christine asked Ron where he would cut as she stated that the departments are at their barebones.
 - Ron asked about the viability of the COLA and Personnel increases.
 - Tracey clarified that it is not Fincom's job to set policy, it is their policy to fund the policies.
 - Christine and Dana suggested that Fincom may not have done detailed projections to cover the 3 year personnel board recommendations.
 - The total of not implementing COLA and personnel increases is about \$48K for FY18.
- There was debate on whether the personnel recommendations should have been an override in 2017 v. a warrant article as it is reoccurring.
- The discussion moved to free cash.
 - The free cash number was certified at \$285K. Christine reiterated that she is comfortable using free cash to close the \$54K deficit. Ron was adamant that we not use free cash.
 - Christine asked Ron to explain how he would like to cover the deficit if it's not free cash.
 - Page 15 of the financial forecast from DLS. The town used a low of \$72K up to \$357K of free cash between FY 2010-2017 to balance historical budgets.
- Harold stated that he has reviewed the budget and it is barebones. He thinks the only place to cut would be the highway truck at \$15K per year. Tracey thinks the number would be closer to \$7,500 since they had reallocated \$7,500 of their budget to afford the new truck.
- Walter Alterisio in the audience argued that the COLA and personnel board recommendations are the responsibility of the management teams in each department to find the funding. Not the selectman and Fincom boards.
 - Tracey argued that this was not the intent when the increases were passed. This is a town problem, not an individual department problem.
- Christine moved the discussion to the warrant articles.
 - First article is the fire ATV at \$27,000. The question came up is it a need or a want.
 - Ron asked if there was an opportunity to fund this in 2019. The board was in agreement to move this article to 2019 to be funded out of operating budget.
 - Stormwater was supposed to be \$68K, but we decreased it to \$58K. We are in year 2 of a 5 year project. This is an EPA requirement. Christine suggested we use free cash.
 - Unpaid bills at \$4,336 will also be covered via free cash.
 - Safe pathways at \$70K. Dana asked if we could use Chapter 90 money for this. Ron stated we should use Chapter 90 funds for roads, not engineering.
 - Consensus was to table this until next year and not include in the FY2018 budget and move to 2019.
 - Replace Engine 2 for \$360K.
 - Discussion moved to if it was necessary to buy a new truck.
 - Harold asked where the truck would be stored. Tracey confirmed that the old truck would be stored in the highway garage. The new truck would be housed at the fire station.

- Amie asked what the impact would be on the taxpayer for this note. Tracey will get back to us.
- The committee decided to table this warrant article until next meeting to get more impact data etc.
- If we approve, this would be through a debt exclusion.
- Highway plow truck for \$164K.
 - This went up about \$45K since last month. Highway stated that the plow truck from 1996 had a recent electrical issue so the main need is for a snow plow truck at a cost of \$164K.
 - Dana asked if there was a comparable truck to employee ratio at the highway department.
 - Tracey confirmed that the analysis was done last year and with the additional staff in winter the numbers make sense.
 - Pam asked if it would be cheaper to not purchase a new truck and hire an outside contractor with their own vehicle.
 - Dana asked if this was a complete truck, i.e. is the plow included.
 - This article will also be tabled. Would be through a debt exclusion.
- Water Engineering for \$200,000.
 - There are 3 project types in the new proposal totaling \$200,000.
 - Dana asked if this engineering cost will get us to shovel ready status and move this project forward.
 - Tracey confirmed this is shovel ready.
- Dana stated that the total debt exclusions with the above is \$724,000
- If we take the stormwater, unpaid bills, holding \$150K in free cash and close the budget of \$54,122, total free cash use adds up to \$266K out of anticipated \$285K.
- A discussion came up on the proposed public safety complex land purchase. It is now called the Community facility property. It is currently in executive session with selectman to expand this use from police and fire to highway etc due to the fact that more acres are required as part of the sale of the parcel in question. The parcel is thought to be about 60 acres. They come out of executive session on Thursday.
- There was one transfer to approve. \$490 to pay for more hours for building inspector. Transferring to building inspector part time wages line item. Dana moved to transfer the \$490 to the building inspector part time wages, Ron seconded, all approved.
- Dana moved to adjourn, Pam seconded, all approved.