



**OFFICE OF THE
Advisory Board
TOWN HALL
511 MAIN STREET
DUNSTABLE, MA 01827-1313
(978) 649-4514 x222 FAX (978) 649-4371
finance@dunstable-ma.gov**

March 13th, 2017

Present: Amie Stevens, Harold Simmons, Christine Muir, Dana Metzler

Absent: Ron Mikol and Pam Crocker

Also present: Tracey Hutton

- Christine opened the meeting at 7:13
- Main item on the agenda was FY18 budget items and review
 - Anything we discuss tonight is possible but not set in stone yet.
 - School
 - Assessment letter from GDRSD is more than originally expected at \$5,607,861. Debt is \$362,377.
 - The School Committee voted to certify a budget higher than the Superintendent had recommended, in part to accommodate prior instruction that the budget include allocation for one-fifth of the Needs Assessment created last year. At last week's Budget and Finance committee meeting, Assistant Superintendent Katie Novak reviewed the updated Needs Assessment and its associated costs. This budget provided an increase to Dunstable of \$27,000 more than the Superintendent's budget.
 - Current deficit in Dunstable's FY18 budget is \$185,809.
 - The following six options allow us to reduce the deficit to the amounts shown:
 - \$55,223=fund GDRSD with 60% of new money plus \$160K from the override last year. Fund no warrant articles
 - \$157,809=Fund the superintendent's budget and add warrant articles
 - \$96,473=Fund the School Committee approved budget but no warrant articles.
 - \$144,559=normal appropriation to GD (60% of new money plus override money) and add warrant articles.
 - \$148,809= fund SC approved budget without ATV warrant and reduce reserve allotment by \$10K.
 - \$107,559=normal appropriation to GD, without ATV warrant and reduce reserve by \$10K.
- Dana asked if we were legally required to fund personnel board recommendations
 - Tracey confirmed we aren't legally bound but it would impact employee morale.
 - Dana stated that there may not be funds for the recommendations.
 - Dana asked about the reporting structure of town employees.
 - Tracey confirmed that each elected board manages their own employees, it is not a delegation structure from the top, i.e. TM down.

- Dana asked what the personnel increase will cost the town.
 - Tracey confirmed its about \$35K not including COLA at \$15,862
- Christine asked what options people see for the budget.
 - Dana does not want to use free cash
 - Dana asked about the library budget. Can we cut without losing certifications.
 - Tracy confirmed the budget already meets the minimum required by the state. Further reductions would result in loss of certification.
 - Dana suggested reducing the reserve fund contribution to \$30K. Tracey countered with \$35K because the departments have already cut their budgets down to barebones. Christine agreed with the \$35K.
- Dana asked why GLRVTHS line item went down. Certified number came in lower than expected.
- With the above suggestions, the below scenarios played out:
 - \$170,809=deficit with full school assessment, warrants etc.
 - \$128,004= deficit includes articles, \$35K in reserve and the Superintendent budget.
 - \$101,004=deficit includes removing the ATV warrant, GDRHS funded at 60% and \$35K addition to reserve fund.
- Dana asked to see a breakdown of the warrant articles that are debt exclusions.
 - Dana suggested we may want to remove some of the articles as there may be too many choices for the town.
 - Tracey suggested we leave them all on for town meeting and let the town decide.
 - Dana asked about the safe pathways article. Tracey suggested to keep it on the town meeting agenda.
- Harold expressed frustration that the school number is higher than expected.
 - Christine stated that the superintendents budget did not include the needs assessment, the School Committee's budget did.
 - The difference between the two budgets is \$27K which would be the needs assessment list.
 - Christine isn't sure Groton is prepared to approve their School committee budget, i.e. \$95K more.
- Dana asked what capital items are in the School Committee budget.
 - \$12.7K HVAC need at high school.
 - \$6.5K for Boutwell.
 - \$12.6K for additional items for schools
 - There was discussion on whether the two towns will create a capital improvement/stabilization fund on an ongoing basis. This would need to be a warrant article in each town.
- Warrant articles are due 3/22/17.
- Discussion moved to the highway backhoe article.
 - There is confusion if the need is a backhoe or truck. Both will need to be replaced in the near future.
 - Can Chapter 90 funds be used to buy new equipment?
 - Tracey confirmed yes but thinks the highway department has other plans for this money in the near future.
- Christine suggested we have an advisory member go to the capital planning meetings.

- Dana asked about the financing for the articles if approved.
 - Tracey confirmed we could see a rate of 3.5% on a 5 year note with \$165K a year of debt service for these.
 - Dana suggested we also add the truck from 2019 from the capital plan.
- Dana asked why the Stormwater management is not in the budget but listed as a warrant article.
 - Tracey confirmed that we are in year 2 of 5 of this. We should have \$300K left. Dana suggested putting the entire amount in the budget.
 - Tracey suggested we pay as we go for the next 3 years because she may be able to get small grants to put towards this.
- Tracey recapped that she would send out the different budget scenarios we discussed at the meeting.
 - reducing reserve
 - different school scenarios
 - COLA and Personnel board recommendations.
- Other Topics
 - Joint meeting with BOS on 3/29/17.
 - Next advisory board meeting is 3/20.
 - Christine would like this meeting to focus on how to close the gap in the budget.
 - Minutes to approve:
 - Dana made a motion to approve the 3/6/17 minutes, Harold seconded, all approved.
 - Harold made a motion to approve the 2/27/17 minutes, Christine seconded all approved.
 - Harold made a motion to approve the 2/23/17 minutes, Christine seconded all approved.
 - Public safety committee
 - leaning toward a one story layout for the structure.
 - Next week items:
 - Deficit
 - Water project
 - Dana inquired about the engineering warrant article for the water project. We will discuss in more detail at next meeting.