



OFFICE OF THE  
Advisory Board  
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December 7, 2015

Attending: Dana Metzler, Amie Stevens, Ron Mikol, Christine Muir, Harold Simmons, Pam Crocker  
Also attending: Town Administrator Tracey Hutton, Selectmen Ken Leva and Walter Alterisio, Capital Planning Committee Members Ron Lively, Harold West and Robert Jacobson

Absent: Selectman Danny Devlin

Meeting opened at 7:00 p.m.

This is a joint meeting of the Advisory Board and the Board of Selectmen.

#### FY 17 Budget Process

Ron began with an overview of the expected budget process for FY 17. Tracey and Jake will handle the outreach to departments for their initial requests; Ron will provide the documents used in previous years. Tracey hopes to get the requests out before Christmas. Her goal is to provide a preliminary budget by the end of January, and a more complete budget by the last week in March. Tracey provided a copy of the exact budget output that Vadar creates; she hopes to find a way to export this data into Excel so that we have a more stable starting point for our budget process.

Department budgets were culled significantly two years ago in order to reach a lower override number, so it's likely that our free cash balances will decline each year. We discussed how to handle budgeting for FY 17 and future years if we cease the practice of using free cash to offset the tax rate. Tracey noted that some towns give each department the total budget number and ask them to allocate within line items as needed. Walter brought up the possibility of zero-based budgeting, in which budgets are created based on needs and expectations rather than starting with the previous year's budget.

We reviewed a copy of the proposed wage classification table put together by the Personnel Board. The table shows current salaries, years of service and average salaries based on other towns' comparable positions. Ron asked about the narrative behind the classifications, and Christine asked if the comparisons take into account qualifications such as advanced degrees. Dana asked if the comparisons take into account full versus part time work. He also noted that there is no range listed, to account for employees who perform above or below average. Tracey reminded us that these numbers are separate from cost of living increases. The Advisory Board asked Tracey if we could get more information on how the chart was put together and more of the background information to better understand it.

#### GDRSD

Last week, Ron and Tracey attended the Tri-Board meeting with the town of Groton and GDRSD. The school anticipates asking for an additional \$3.5 million for FY 17; approximately \$800,000 of that would be assessed to the town of Dunstable, and \$2.7 million would be asked of Groton. At that meeting, Groton Town Manager Mark Haddad indicated that this would probably require an override in Groton and he didn't anticipate any trouble getting town approval for it. GDRSD Superintendent Kristan Rodriguez stated that the additional request comes from a needs assessment that she recently completed with her school principals, and is meant to close an achievement gap. More details are expected soon. Business Manager Jared Stanton had also stated that

approximately \$1 million dollars is needed each year to maintain step and lane change costs for current teachers. Tracey asked how this number is impacted by the new staff called for in the needs assessment.

#### Capital Planning Committee

The Capital Planning Committee presented the first draft of a five-year capital plan, based primarily on input from the various department heads, including Library, Police, Highway and a few others. The copy we have did not include information for the Fire Department, but there are requests from that department. CPC will make their recommendations based on the budget. Tracey asked the boards to consider whether capital expenses should be included in the operating budgets or separated out. There was discussion around what pieces are missing, such as when roof replacements might be needed, and keeping maintenance separate from capital, as they are two different expenses. Tracey is pursuing a grant that would provide for a building evaluation and analysis, which would give us something of a checklist for long-term planning. Dana suggested that we get some definite debt numbers from our school districts, and consider excluding some debt, such as the contract for Route 113 and the salt shed, so that we might free up some money in our operating budget.

At this time, the members of the Capital Planning Committee and the Board of Selectman left the meeting.

#### Meeting Minutes

The Advisory Board unanimously approved the minutes of November 9. There are no minutes from the Special Town Meeting on November 17, as the board did not need to convene beforehand.

#### Transfers

The board unanimously approved the following two transfers:

- \$200 to the town clerk for office supplies
- \$200 to the town clerk for tags, supplies and a sign for the dog license program

#### New Business

Tracey mentioned that the town hall elevator and lift failed inspection. She does not have a quote yet for repairs needed.

We adjourned at 8:40 p.m.