

*Town of Dunstable*  
**Joint Meeting of the Selectboard & Advisory Board**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**May 24, 2016**  
**Town Hall, Dunstable, MA 01827**

**Convened:** 7:00 pm

**Present:** Daniel F. Devlin, chair, Walter F. Alterisio, Leah D. Basbanes, member(s); Tracey Hutton, Town Administrator; Christine Muir, chair, Dana Metzler, Amie Stevens, Advisory Board

**Special Town Meeting, Election, & Override**

Mr. Devlin opened the joint meeting by going over the agenda which included selecting dates for a Special Town Meeting, a Special Town Election, and determining the override amount to request.

Ms. Hutton summarized the previous night's Advisory Board meeting, in which some procedural issues were addressed with the department heads and representatives in attendance. She stated that the town must adopt a budget that does not require an override in order to continue operations on July 1. Since the bulk of the override request was connected to the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, Ms. Hutton shared information on Groton's plan moving forward. Groton can afford to give the school district \$1.3 million without an override. That translates to an additional \$430,000 from Dunstable, and would give the district an additional \$1.7 million over the FY16 budget.

Budgeting for this \$430,000 increase to GDRSD results in a deficit of \$275,000 assuming the following actions also occur: remove the subsidy to the transfer station, either by closing the station or raising fees so it is self-sufficient; remove all town employee raises and the recommendations from the Personnel Board; use \$200,000 in free cash. In a meeting last week, the School Committee discussed an additional assessment of \$2.73 million to both towns. If the School Committee votes to approve a budget of this size, the town of Dunstable could be looking at a deficit of \$596,631, including the same conditions defined above. In order to have an election on June 30, the ballot question must be finalized by May 26. In response to these facts the Board and Advisory Board tentatively agreed to the following dates: June 6 Advisory Board Public Hearing, June 14 Special Town Meeting, June 30 Special Town Election.

The draft warrant for the Special Town Meeting contains three articles: one to revise the salary for the Treasurer/Tax Collector to remove the proposed raises; another to pay the snow & ice deficit from FY16 surplus funds, totaling approximately \$38,000; the last to approve an operating budget. The Board will also have to decide whether to split the override question into two amounts, one for GDRSD and one for municipal, or leave it as one. General consensus was to use just one question. Discussion then moved to whether or not to ask about excluding the Greater Lowell Tech debt again. No one is sure why the question failed in May. The Board expressed some concern that people might not have understood that the debt would have little impact on the tax rate, as other debt would be retiring and coming off the tax rate. Members of the public, and both of the boards, seemed to think it was worth asking again. The project has been completed and the payments are currently coming out of the operating budget; excluding the debt would allow the town to reduce the deficit in the proposed operating budget. The payments peak at about \$40,000 in FY18 and beyond.

Ms. Hutton then reported a request by the Town Clerk for additional funds to hire a part-time person to cover the Special Town Meeting and Election, as she will be out of the office. Neither board had any objections to this request. Discussion then quickly turned from this topic to the research Ms. Hutton has completed regarding the number of times both towns can vote down an override necessary to meet the School Committee's certified budget. This provoked some discussion about how to educate the public on the new override request and the new budget that will be proposed at Special Town Meeting. Town employees and elected officials must limit their comments to factual information only, and no advocacy statements either for or against a ballot question. Additional questions and discussion from the public audience involved whether the water infrastructure project can be factored into an override (it cannot at this time); what the override

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number would be to keep all services (more than \$730,000 if no free cash was used); low-income provisions and exemptions related to CPC 3% surcharge.

Both boards adjourned at 8:30 pm

Respectfully submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jakob K. Hamm', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jakob K. Hamm  
Admin. Assistant to the Selectboard & Town Administrator

*Approved and adopted on 6/15/16*