

Town of Dunstable
Joint Meeting of the Selectboard & Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
May 25, 2016
Town Hall, Dunstable, MA 01827

Convened: 7:15 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, Harold Simmons, Advisory Board

Discussion of School Committee Vote & Override Figure

Ms. Hutton started off by presenting to the boards the newly revised numbers from GDRSD. She stated that the School Committee has voted to certify a budget with an additional \$2.65 million assessment for both towns. Because of the way minimum contributions are calculated for each town, the increased assessment to Dunstable is \$627,266. This creates a deficit of \$530,266 for the town's total operating budget, even with \$200,000 of free cash and removing the transfer station subsidy, Personnel Board recommended raises and standard cost-of-living adjustments (COLA). She reminded the board that they had to settle on an override request tonight, in order to meet deadlines to present a ballot question on June 30.

Ms. Hutton then stated that she feels that the town can get to an override number under \$500,000. The Board asked what the cost of this would be. Ms. Hutton responded that it would possibly include closing the library one day, reducing payment for volunteer firefighters, some cuts in the Highway Department, plus the removal of the transfer station subsidy and salary increases. The Board was generally in favor of retaining the salary increases, including one for the Town Clerk, which is not included in the Personnel Board recommendations. In order to pass a budget that isn't contingent on an override, there would need to be another \$260,000 in cuts.

Members of the public in the audience debated various aspects of the school budget, and outreach opportunities for educating others on the budget process and reasoning. The Board noted that the elements of the budget under its direct control total \$1.6 million. The Board stated that it may be viable to find \$260,000 to cut. However, the Board also noted that towns like Essex and Merrimac, which are similar to Dunstable in terms of population, have significantly higher revenue numbers.

Mr. Simmons expressed the opinion that it was a mistake to wait on asking for the debt exclusion for the Greater Lowell Vocational School. The payment in year one was only about \$1,700 but in FY18, it will be up to \$40,000. This resulted in some discussion regarding the debt exclusions.

Both boards adjourned at 8:40 pm

Respectfully submitted by



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

Approved and adopted on 6/15/16