

Town of Farmington
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 26, 2017

Committee Members Present:

Sylvia Arcouette, Chairman
Elizabeth Johnson, Secretary
Neil Johnson, Selectmen's Rep.
Angie Cardinal, School Board Rep.
Jason Lauze
Stephen Henry
Sam Cataldo
Michelle Elbert
Heidi Mitchell
Tim Brown

Committee Members Absent:

Jodi Connolly, Vice Chairman

Others Present:

Arthur Capello, Town Administrator

1). Call to Order:

Chairman Arcouette called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

2). Pledge of Allegiance:

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3). Public Comment (10 minutes): None

4). Review of Minutes:

June 28, 2017- No errors or omissions

Motion: (N. Johnson, second Henry) to accept the minutes as written passed 7-0-3 (Mitchell, Brown, Cardinal abstained).

5). Review School Reports:

SAU Superintendent Ruth Ellen Vaughn and SAU Business Administrator Laurie Verville did not attend the meeting and there were no school reports received to review.

6). Review Town Reports:

Town Administrator Arthur Capello said that due to vacation schedules he did not have an answer to the question raised last month about the reason for the \$3,972 expenditure in the Police Dept. Dues budget line but said he would get the answer for the committee.

Chairman Arcouette said she would like to thank Assessing Clerk Kelly Heon for her hard work in compiling and distributing the Town Reports to the committee during the Finance Administrator's absence.

Mr. Capello agreed and noted Ms. Heon has been working hard to fill in for Mrs. Merrill and to fulfill the duties of her own position at the same time "keeping the Town out of trouble".

Actual & Budgeted Expenses & Encumbrance Report (June)

Page 8, Line 01-4312-20-741 Traffic Signs- Mr. Johnson asked about the \$747.24 expended in June which is more than three-quarters of the total amount budgeted for this line.

Mr. Capello said he noticed that some traffic signs have been on sale recently so the DPW Director may have decided to stock up on some signs commonly used by the Town. He said he would find out the reason for the expense.

Unanticipated Revenue- Mr. Brown asked about the \$141,635 in unanticipated revenue from the state Highway Safety Administration and asked if there are any stipulations on the use of the money.

Mr. Capello said the legislature has allocated \$36 million from last year's budget surplus to go back to communities. He said \$6 million of that amount is going to bridge work and approx. \$30 million will be divided among the communities. Farmington is slated to receive \$141,000 which has to be used for road infrastructure. He said he has not seen anything in writing other reading the bill, but the only stipulation he is aware of so far is that it can only be used for road and bridge work and cannot be a supplement to what is already budgeted. He said the NH Municipal Association has contacted the Dept. of Transportation for more information.

Mr. Capello then commented that everything is tracking the way it should be.

Revenue Increases- Mr. Johnson asked if revenues are up this year.

Mr. Capello said revenue has increased in several lines this year with the largest increase coming from the sale of Town property. Two tax deeded properties have been sold and a third will go before the Board of Selectmen on Monday he said.

Page 5, Line 01-4220-10-110-Fire Dept. Chief- Mr. Lauze asked how the Fire Chief is paid.

Mr. Capello said the Chief is paid weekly as are all Town employees.

Mr. Lauze said the amount listed in the period expenditure column (\$5,150) is more than one-twelfth of his total salary.

Mr. Capello said that June had five pay weeks.

There were no other questions for Mr. Capello from the members.

Chairman Arcouette thanked him for attending the meeting.

7). Old Business:

School Board Response to Information Request-Ms. Cardinal provided a response from the School Board regarding a committee request at the May meeting for information concerning the cost for a tuition based education system from 3 neighboring school districts, student population, budget increases/decreases and Special Education costs over the last 10 years. She said she relayed the request to the School board and they reviewed the rules and responsibilities of the Bud Com and the related state law and there was no motion entertained to honor the committee's request.

Mr. Johnson asked if the School Board decided not to honor the entire request made by the committee.

Ms. Cardinal said no motion was made regarding the committee's request.

Right to Know Law Request- Mr. Johnson then made a personal RSA 91-A request for student enrollment and budgets for the last 10 years. He said he knew the information is in the

possession of the school district and the committee should have that information. It has been discussed at meetings and is contained in the minutes but hasn't been provided he said.

Ms. Cardinal said the information requested is available online at the NH Dept. of Education's website.

Mr. Johnson said then the district should be able to provide it.

Mr. Brown asked to include an amendment to Mr. Johnson's request to include class sizes for that time period as well.

Ms. Cardinal asked if Mr. Johnson was asking for the budget amounts allocated or raised locally for 10 years.

Mr. Johnson said he was requesting the total budget amount each year for the last 10 years. He asked that the budget be broken down to show the Middleton/Farmington contributions to the budget for the years Middleton was part of the district.

Ms. Cardinal explained that the 2 town's contributions added together will not equal the total school budget for each year because of the various special revenues received by the district each year.

Mr. Henry suggested including the number of classes for each grade excluding the high school to show whether adding/dropping a class would make the class sizes too big or too small to achieve the school district's goals.

Mr. Brown said he found it atrocious that elected officials who were put into office to represent the taxpayers of this town don't want to provide publically available data to a committee that is in charge of forming a budget to look out for the interest of those taxpayers.

Ms. Cardinal repeated the information is available on the NH Dept. of Education website.

Mr. Brown said there is also an RSA that states the committee has the right to ask any committee or employee for information that will assist the committee in the formation of the budget.

He said he hoped the tax payers would remember this when it comes time to go to the polls.

Ms. Cardinal asked if Mr. Brown thought it was "atrocious" that the School Board did not want to put a school district employee to work on numbers that are readily available from the state.

Mr. Brown said if the data is readily available it will take them 5 minutes to compile the data for the committee.

Ms. Cardinal then said she would compile the data personally and noted that she is pretty savvy with computers and that she would time herself on how long it takes her to complete the request. She asked if that would be helpful in making an assumption that it would take 5 minutes to complete the task. She added that the data is not compiled for 10 years worth of work which is the analysis requested.

Mr. Brown said the town is looking at a \$2 to \$3 tax increase in December and said he felt the committee owes it to the tax payers to look at every penny that the town spends.

Ms. Cardinal said they are trying to keep the amount of labor placed on the school district employees at a reasonable level. Otherwise we are taking them away from meaningful work that is a good use of tax payers' money she said.

Mr. Brown asked how much time did the SAU spend researching the validity of the Bud Com

and whether they even had to deal with or respond to the Bud Com.

Ms. Cardinal said the School Board did not direct the SAU staff to do any such thing.

She said she did that research personally on her own personal time. She added she will personally take the data and put it the form requested with her personal time because she believes it is not good use of tax dollars for the SAU staff to do such a task.

Mr. Johnson said there is no place in the RSA that makes any allowance for the amount of work that is being done. The request is made, it gets filled and that's all there is to it he said.

Chairman Arcouette said the RSA 91-A request has been made, Ms. Cardinal has agreed to provide the information that was requested and called for the end of the discussion on the issue.

Mr. Lauze asked about the purpose of the request.

Mr. Johnson said he wanted to see the numbers to compare the data for the number of students currently in school and what the budget is and track it over a 10 year period.

Mr. Lauze said that it makes sense to do the comparison but said they should also look at inflation and cost of materials over that time.

Mr. Henry said he thought the request at the May meeting included a request for information about tuitioning students to other towns.

Ms. Cardinal said the motion was two-fold, the 10 year data and to find out what 3 area school districts would charge Farmington to tuition students there which would require negotiations.

She said that issue was the main challenge of the request and that the board denied the original request as a whole. She invited members to watch the discussion of the matter at June 5th School Board meeting available on You Tube.

Mrs. Johnson asked if the discussion is in the minutes of the meeting and where the minutes could be found.

Ms. Cardinal said the information is included in the minutes of the meeting which are available by a RSA 91-A request.

Mr. Johnson asked why the minutes need to be requested by a RSA 91-A request.

Ms. Cardinal said the minutes can be requested in print or soft copy but they are not available online as the SAU is still working on getting that working. She said that for months they thought the minutes were available online but found that the links are not working properly.

Mr. Henry said he recalled that the School Board made a motion that all of their public and non-public minutes be put online. He asked if it their intent was that the minutes be posted online but that they are not yet online.

Ms. Cardinal said that is correct. She said there is some sort of technical issue having to do with permissions to access the files by whoever created the files and that they are trying to avoid having to re-create every single file. She said all of the minutes are available by a RSA 91-A request by e-mail to the SAU.

Mr. Henry said he understood about keeping costs and workloads down but the request to put the minutes online was made more than 9 months ago. He said there is concern about the time the staff spends handling requests and suggested that someone spend the 2 hours it would take to fix it instead of the time it takes responding to individual e-mail requests.

Mrs. Johnson said School Board member Stan Freeda brought up the issue of the minutes not being posted yet at the last School Board meeting.

Ms. Cardinal said the law requires that the meeting minutes be available and they are available. It is the intention of the School Board and the SAU to have them available with an easy click online but it is just not working right now she said.

Mr. Henry said he was not talking about what the law required but serving the tax payers beyond the bare minimum.

Chairman Arcouette said the committee can request the problem be addressed but suggested this is a discussion to be brought back to the School Board as it is a problem they need to address.

Mr. Henry said it is clear that the School board stated that is their intention but it is also clear that it is not a priority.

8). New Business:

Mr. Brown said the school fiscal year closes July 1 and asked about the length of transition period until the books are closed for the year.

Ms. Cardinal said the books were closed by mid-September last year.

Mr. Brown asked if there would be a projection on any budget surplus that could affect the tax rate by mid-Sept.

Ms. Cardinal said they hoped to have a budget projection before then but the final tally would not be available before then.

Mr. Henry noted the school fiscal year ends June 30 and the new fiscal year begins July 1.

9). Public Comment (10 minutes max): None

10). Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 23, 2017

11). Adjournment:

Motion: (Cataldo, second N. Johnson) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 7:30 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary

Sylvia Arcouette, Chairman

