

**Finance Committee Meeting Minutes  
December 16, 2003  
Town Building  
APPROVED**

The meeting is brought to order at 7:05 p.m. In attendance are Tom Ryan, Patti Heron, Pam Glauner, Charlie Kern, Steve Dungan, Laura Rome, Mary Kerr, Janet Wheeler, and Jason Robart. David Walrath arrives at 7:55.

**Discussion of Nashoba Regional School District Financial Issues**

Also in attendance are Superintendent Michael Wood and School Committee members Nancy Fleming, Carole Makary, and Chris Way. Michael Wood states that areas of savings were found over the summer due to various hiring changes where staff was hired at a lower salary due to retirement or other reasons. Surplus funds were found in SPED expenses since the funding to pay for SPED changed in our favor since town meeting. The changes proposed with this surplus deal with health, safety, and other pressing issues. The increase in tutor hours is due to contractual obligations to give tutors more time before and after class. Additional janitorial support is also added to keep the schools at an acceptable level of cleanliness. The proposed purchase of routing software is needed since it is not in the current transportation contract. The School Committee wants to purchase this software before the transportation contracts go out to bid so the bus companies bid on actual routes. The user fees for sports were also reduced and advisor stipends were also added with these surplus funds.

Tom distributes a memo to the School Committee showing the Fincom opinion on the tough financial times this year. Michael Wood distributes a document Re: FY '04 operating budget areas of surplus. Michael adds that a collaborative Zero Based Budgeting approach will continue. Tom states that if funds are not used for what they were allotted, the funds should go to reducing the assessments to the towns. Mary asserts that the purview of each committee is not the same, and the Fincom should be careful not to micromanage educational affairs.

Carole Makary responds to a question posed by the Fincom that the budget at the end of the year is perfectly balanced. Now, there is a new administration and new controls, and no funds are shifted without the approval of the School Committee and FAB. Carole stated that the school committee had promised that if the approved state budget returned one dollar to the benefit of the district, that dollar would be returned to the three towns -- which it did. She further explained that when the school district had the FY03 free cash certified it was then split into two pieces: \$400,000, which was returned to the three towns, with the balance moved into a reserve account. The fact is, twice in the past year, when faced with surplus cash, the school district heard what the towns were saying, acknowledged the fiscal climate and returned cash to the towns, as promised. Chris Way adds that the manner that the School Committee acted is responsible and the decisions are educationally sound. Nancy Fleming adds that a 1% shift in funds is minimal. She asks that the Fincom get information directly from the School Committee instead of the media. Nancy adds that academic and athletic integrity must be maintained, so reducing the user fees was needed to maintain a comprehensive high school. Michael Wood adds that this list of expenses is the final list for the year. This list began as a much longer one, and there will not be another one during FY '04.

Tom moves to send the letter that he wrote to the School Committee, Patti seconds the motion. Steve states that it might be better to communicate these ideas in person. Jason suggests working with the administration and School Committee to make a mutually agreeable budget. The motion fails with Tom, Patti in favor, Jason and Steve against, and David abstains. Tom moves to work with the School Committee and the district to develop the budget, Jason seconds the motion. Carole Makary suggests using the Tri-Town group to facilitate this meeting. The motion passes unanimously.

Tom moves to adjourn the meeting, Jason seconds the motion. The motion passes unanimously.  
The meeting is adjourned at 8:15.  
Respectfully submitted by Mitchell Samson.

**Action Item-Jason and Pam to present the FinCom recommendations and concerns voiced at this meeting at an upcoming School Committee meeting.**