

Selectmen's Meeting
Monday, April 3, 2017
Town Office Building

Attending: T. Fydenkevez, S. Bergeron, D. Pierce, S. Patch
Others: B. Berry, L. Starr, K. Hand, N. Blais, B. Bennett, W. Power, A. Kajustras, E. Crowe, D. Fulton, K. McFarland, Supt. Carey, M. Wozniakiewicz
Behind the Camera: FCAT

Meeting called to order at 6:40 PM.

FY 18 Budget Discussion

Mr. Bergeron advised that a Capital Planning Committee meeting is scheduled for tomorrow and will then be able to bring their full recommendation forward. The board discussed the Personnel Advisory Committee's salary and wage rate adjustment recommendations. Mr. Fydenkevez stated that he went through the FRCOG wage salary and that the Highway Superintendent was in the upper median of the towns surveyed. Mr. Fydenkevez stated that there is a difference in the responsibilities of the Superintendent from town to town. Mr. Fydenkevez stated that we cannot just look at the salary in order to make a recommendation. Mr. Fydenkevez also stated that the Superintendent also receives overtime for snow and ice and that in many towns the superintendents do not receive overtime. Mr. Fydenkevez stated that he's going to have a hard time supporting the committee's recommendation. Mr. Bergeron stated that it would be less than \$10,000 for a 2% Cola adjustment for all non-union employees. Mr. Bergeron further pointed out that the library department is the only department to receive a wage adjustment since the 2009 budget cuts. Mr. Pierce stated that a programmatic approach is needed and more research into what towns are comparable. Finance Committee member Bruce Bennett stated that the salaries reflect the responsibilities and job tasks. Mr. Bennett stated that a number of candidates for the Police Chief position dropped last year due to the low salary level. Mr. Bennett stated that in his opinion the levels recommended are fair and that the salaries need to be adjusted. Mr. Bergeron stated that for many years the Town Administrator salary lagged behind the Police Chief due to the ability of the town to pay. Mr. Bergeron stated that the recommended increases will add \$44,000 to this year's budget and will reset the budget for next year as well. Mr. Bennett stated that the town's growth does not match revenues and an override is needed to reset. Mr. Pierce stated that the recommendations show where employees should be. However, the reality of the budget is that increases may need to be phased in over a few years. Mr. Pierce stated that he is unsatisfied with the information that is available and that the committee looked at hiring the Collins Center next year. Lorin Starr stated that the library looked at 20-25 libraries when doing their analysis. The analysis still showed a big discrepancy. Lorin stated that the discussion should focus on what we can afford not whether people are worth it. Mr. Bergeron stated that we have a structural budget deficit of \$105,000 at this time. The Elementary school has advised that this year's baseline will be short for next year, which means that there needs to be a conversation on having an override at least for the \$105,000. Mr. Bergeron stated that just because the board asks for an override this year, it doesn't mean that it will be built into the budget this year. Mr. Fydenkevez stated that it is important to look at sustainability. We can ask for an override, but it doesn't mean we will get one. Mr. Fydenkevez noted that the library has several positions that have titles such as "head of." Mr. Fydenkevez noted that the FRCOG

study did not have heads listed in their survey just library aides. Library Director Katherine Hand advised that library aides do not have the same responsibilities. Ms. Hand stated that the Head of Youth services is responsible for all Youth Services.

Mr. Bennett noted the increase in fixed costs such as employee benefits which the town has no control over.

Mr. Bergeron stated that excess Free Cash this year is due to encumbered funds and prior year carry-overs. This won't happen next year. Free cash is non-recurring and could be \$300,000 or less next year.

School Committee Chair Doug Fulton expressed they are spending more on School Choice then taking in and won't be able to afford it next year which would be \$100,000 deficit.

Motion: Mr. Bergeron to include Personnel Committee recommendation for discussion, Second: Mr. Pierce, 3-0. Mr. Bergeron stated library's counter proposal with moderation of middle ground exceeds departmental request. Mr. Fydenkevez stated he would like to see new numbers next week for discussion. Ms. Hand stated a happy medium is a feasible step. Highway Superintendent should have COLA with possible contract per Mr. Bergeron's recommendation.

Discussion continued regarding an override vs. free cash to close the budget deficit. Further discussion continued regarding amount for override. Finance Committee member consensus recommendation for override is \$311,000. Mr. Bergeron stated it should be a round number of \$300,000. **Motion: Mr. Bergeron to include the following question on the Annual Election Ballot: Shall the Town Of Sunderland be allowed to assess an additional \$300,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purposes of funding the operating budgets of the Town and the Public Schools for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2017? Second: Mr. Pierce. Voted: 2-1, Mr. Fydenkevez (opposed).**

Finance Committee to support \$300,000 override. Mr. Bergeron stated a single warrant article should be presented for the override of 300,000, Vote 3-0.

Budget review by Item.

- Town Admin salary was deferred last year as she did not take a raise.
- Accountant: contractual expense
- Assessors: software increase is reason for higher budget which included a bid for software services.
- Treasurer/Collector: percentages are based on 2%
- Town Clerk - percentages are based on 2%
- Telecommunications was incorporated into FCAT which was previously taken out of PEG Access funding.
- Town Buildings: Energy will include Schedule Z will result in new accountant and will encompass all energy bills for applicable town departments benefiting from the newly installed solar system at the Elementary School grounds.
- School budget will revote eliminating the energy costs. Mr. Bergeron noted this is not a reduction of budget for departments, just reallocated funds for energy usage. Energy

contingency line will cover any amounts not covered by the solar program but only the town building side would be effected by that scenario. This is a transition year with the energy costs.

- Total government: \$11,000 increase based on salaries and energy costs predominantly.
- Police: Budget presented does not include police contract negotiated rates. Mr. Bergeron will give figure to Ms. Patch to include in budget planning based on expected negotiation package.
- Fire Department: increase includes a new truck
- Town Inspectors
- Other Protection: radio system for Police and Fire includes a regional study which has just been done 3-4 years ago.

Finance Committee asked about the increase in Street Light costs. Mr. Bergeron explained that the line for streetlights includes expected rate increases. The town is exploring LED retrofits for their street lighting needs.

- Highway Department: Superintendent position increase included discussion regarding the role of the Highway Superintendent who does not have a contract. Mr. Bergeron recommends a COLA for the Superintendent with struggle as we ask for an override which could include one salary increase adjustment. Mr. Fydenkevez would recommend a \$1/hour increase, not including a COLA; it would be one or the other.
- Health and Sanitation: no increase
- Library: include library's recommendation of the BOLT alternate of \$10,561.68.
- Schools: Schools line will look like there was a reduction in the budget but it will be important to remember there was just a shift of expense from their line to another. Mr. Moderator asked what the balance was in School Choice – Mr. Fulton stated it was \$30,000+ after expenses paid this year and expenses for next year. School will revote their budget Thursday evening; Mr. Bergeron noted they remember the reduction in budget is due to the shift in energy fund sources.
- Benefits and Insurance: added hours from worker's comp and medical benefits which will be seeing a significant change, which the town has no control over. The estimated cost is \$95,000.
- Grant for school grounds of \$6,000 for improvements. Ms. Patch will explore further and see if mowing expenses can be removed from town costs, etc.
- Towns Operating Budget represents a 4%.
- OPEB line item: free cash guidelines is to fund a piece of OPEB, which is expected to be approximately \$28,000+.
- Capital Stabilization Override needs to be shown on the revenue sheet.
- Some out of budget expenditures such as PEG Access, etc. have not been included. We are looking at a deficit of around \$100,000. The easiest method to take care of the deficit would be to take from Free Cash and then address sustainability next year. Mr. Bergeron noted if we use the guidelines developed and minus items needed to address, that would leave \$91,000 for next year.

Mr. Bergeron noted that we still do not have a state budget.

Mr. Fulton noted increases in student population drives costs and that Sunderland Elementary is the only school in the district with student increases.

Motion: Mr. Bergeron to submit ballot question to the Town Clerk for inclusion on the ballot, Mr. Pierce Second, Vote 3-0.

Motion: Mr. Pierce to accept Minutes of March 27, 2017, Mr. Bergeron Second, Vote: 3-0.

Mr. Bergeron thanked the audience for participating in the discussion tonight.

Adjournment

Motion: Mr. Bergeron to adjourn the meeting. Second: Mr. Pierce. Voted: 3-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,


Sherry Patch
Town Administrator