

Finance Committee Meeting

May 10, 2010

7:30 PM

NORTON TOWN CLERK

MAY 24 2010

Municipal Center – Selectmen's Conference Room

RECEIVED

Present: Chairman, Wayne Graf; Vice-Chairman, Thomas DeLuca; Pasquale Barletta; Robert Bouchard; Michael Flaherty; Paul Helmreich; Cheryl McFaun (late arrival); Michael Thomas (late arrival); Philip Zawasky.

Absent: Jackie Desrochers; Lee Tarantino.

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm.

I. Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to approve the May 3, 2010 Finance Committee minutes as written.

Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: All in favor, with Mr. Flaherty and Mr. Zawasky abstaining. **Motion carries.**

Motion was made by Mr. Helmreich to approve the May 5, 2010 Finance Committee minutes as written.

Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: All in favor, with Mr. Thomas abstaining. **Motion carries.**

II. New Business

Wetland By-law - The Conservation Commission addressed the Finance Committee regarding the wetland by-law. Ms. Jennifer Carlino, Conservation agent, said that the ConCom has had public hearings for the public to have their concerns heard, but noted that there were not many residents in attendance. She said that the new draft has answered and addressed all questions that have been posed. Ms. Carlino said that the ConCom is in the process of drafting the regulations that would enforce this by-law and anticipate that the draft will be ready for Town Meeting on June 7th. Mr. Helmreich agreed that the townspeople would likely want to see a copy of the regulations at Town Meeting. It was noted that the regulations are not what would be voted on at Town Meeting and that a public hearing would need to be held before the regulations are made. Mr. DeLuca asked how different the updated by-laws are from the previous draft that is in the warrant, and pointed out that any changes would have to be provided in writing, and moved as such, at Town Meeting. Ms. Carlino said that all the updates and changes are available on the town website, or if someone wanted a paper copy he/she could call the ConCom office and request it to be sent to them.

School Department Budget – Dr. Ansay, Superintendent, and the School Committee addressed the FinCom regarding the FY11 School Budget. Dr. Ansay, using a PowerPoint presentation, reviewed various components of the School's budget. She spoke about budget challenges, recurring fixed costs, and Chapter 70 allocations over the past few years. Dr. Ansay pointed out that more than half of the school's budget is paid for by the state. For FY11, Chapter 70 is contributing \$12,083,038 and the town is contributing \$10,706,076, for a total of \$22,789,294.

Dr. Ansay pointed out that regular education allotment has decreased, and conversely special education allotment has increased. She said that the special education services are mandated by the state and regular education is not, therefore money is being taken from regular education to fund the mandated special education services and programs. Dr. Ansay also noted the high tuitions of out-of-district placements. She said that the rate of out-of-district reimbursements had been 72%, and last year it dropped to 40%, and the school department has been told that the reimbursement rate for FY11 will be 32%.

Dr. Ansay also pointed out that since FY07 the School Department budget has received less than 1% increases and in FY09 it had a decrease, which is what may happen in FY11.

Dr. Ansay described the many ways the school department has already made cuts to get to the presented budget, and then went on to describe the cuts that would have to be made to get to a level-funded budget, and then further, the cuts that would need to be made if the level-funded budget needed to be cut by another 4% because of the reduction in Local Aid from the state. She said that in the 2005-06 school year, there were 247 teacher units and for the 2011-12 school year, there would be 217.

Dr. Ansay said that the school department has taken actions to help their financial situation by being a part of the Energy Educational Program, receiving 12 grants, and implementing user fees. She went on to say that this summer they are running a new summer program, are adding grants, and will be saving money with solar panel grids.

Mr. Tom Golota, School Committee Chairman, pointed out that students in the Norton Public Schools are paying approximately \$283K in user fees and that there is no other group in town that is paying this much money for services that they should be receiving for free.

Mr. Helmreich said that he never had a problem paying taxes for Norton because the money would be used for the town and he is hoping that the community will decide that money spent in the community is money well spent.

Mr. Thomas commented on the special education mandates that are unfunded. He said that he feels that if the funding is reduced, then the mandates should also be reduced. He said that someone needs to have the political courage to propose an override.

Dr. Ansay said that teachers and school employees are getting disheartened and are not feeling supported. Mr. Helmreich also expressed his concern for the lowering of morale among the school employees. He stressed that the teachers need to feel valued, respected, and appreciated and that they don't when class sizes continue to increase while supplies and support continue to decrease.

Ms. Jeanne Sullivan, director of Special Education, said that 20% of all students are receiving special educational services. She said that a big challenge is when new students move in to town and need special education services. She said that there are 46-48 students who are presently placed out-of-district for services and that a very expensive piece of out-of-district placement is the transportation.

Mr. Golota stated that the town pays the first \$39K for each out-of-district placement and only after that does the state's reimbursement begin.

Ms. Beth McManus, school committee member, pointed out that the town is actually paying for 24-hour care for some students, and that inquiries should be made into the possibility of the students' health insurance paying for a portion of their care.

Dr. Ansay said that there are presently 197 students from Norton in the Foxboro Charter School. She said that the school system is trying to lower that number in a variety of ways, such as offering Full-Day Kindergarten and incorporating foreign language classes at the elementary level. She anticipates that these changes will make a difference in enrollment numbers in the upcoming years.

Ms. Marge Warner, school committee member, pointed out that if residents are paying user fees now anyway, why not vote for an override and make those costs go away.

It was also pointed out that Norton's Grade 10 MCAS scores were higher than the Charter School's scores. (Dr. Ansay referred to the 2009 Math, ELA, and Science scores).

III. Other Business

Mr. Barletta questioned whether the town has insurance to cover the liability of the Everett Leonard Pool lifeguards. The consensus was that any incident would be covered under the town's general insurance.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2010 at 7:30pm.

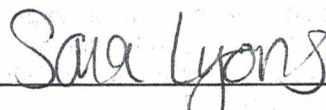
The Public Hearing will be held on May 26th.

Adjournment

Motion was made by Mr. Zawasky to adjourn at 8:50 pm. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: Unanimous.

Motion carries.

Respectfully Submitted by:



Sara Lyons, Finance Committee Secretary