

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC HEARING  
PROPOSED 2 1/2 FORMULA BUDGET  
March 25, 1991



Present: M. Brown, J. Desrochers, K. Eagan, W. Gouveia,  
M. Hackett, E. Hamilton, P. Helmreich, B. Kimball, C. MacQuown,  
P. Nugent, D. Ward

P. Helmreich opened meeting by reading two sections of the Town Charter by-law. He cited from Section 63 which notes that the Town Manager shall submit a proposed operating budget for the ensuing fiscal year (after consultation with the Board of Selectmen) with an accompanying message to the Finance Committee. The Town Manager shall simultaneously provide for publication in a local newspaper a summary of the proposed budget, and the summary shall indicate any variations from the current operating budget. He also cited from Section 66 noting that the Finance Committee shall provide a notice in a local publication stating the time and place of a public hearing to discuss the proposed operating budget with citizens of the Town.

P. Helmreich stated that the Finance Committee received from the Town Manager a comprehensive budget designed to bring the expenditures of the Town within the limits of the Proposition 2 1/2 formula. He said that copies of the full budget with the Town Manager's message are available for scrutiny. P. Helmreich next reviewed the four-page summary fact sheet prepared by the Finance Committee that indicates the changes in services that will be brought about by the proposition 2 1/2 formula budget. He also noted the two basic problem areas the Town faces: that the tax levy can be no more than 2 1/2% of what was levied the year before and that the inflation rate is always greater than 2 1/2%. He also discussed the serious drop in Town revenues--particularly in state and federal aid--and the debt exclusion and rubbish collection overrides.

P. Helmreich next called on the audience for questions and concerns.

M. Wynn read a prepared statement about level funding of the Treasurer/Collector's salary.

The following questions were asked of the members of the Committee:

Clarification of the rubbish collection override.

Regarding the increase in home evaluations, where is that money going?

Are bond payments and health insurance payments included in the School side of the budget?

Why are positions being filled in the fire and police departments when people leave?

Where are the shortfalls coming from?  
 Are monies not spent in Town departments returned to the coffers?  
 What is the position of the Finance Committee regarding the  
     proposed formula 2 1/2 budget?  
 Is the budget being prepared as a scare tactic to get the Town  
     to override proposition 2 1/2?  
 Where will the revenue come from if the Town's people cannot pay?  
 Did the Committee get figures from other towns regarding bids for  
     rubbish collection?  
 What will the teachers raises cost? Can they be renegotiated?  
 Why can't some programs and jobs be eliminated instead of an  
     override?  
 What are the revenues from the ambulance receipts fund used for?  
     What expenses are being charged against this account?  
 Is it better to cut back rather than have a trash collection  
     override?  
 Has the Committee referred to Mr. Tyler's budget for ideas on  
     where to cut?  
 What is the Stabilization Fund? What expenses are charged from  
     this fund? Could that money be put into the operating  
     budget?  
 What happens to the \$500,000 raised for rubbish collection the  
     following year? Can the town use that money to fund  
     salaries?

The following are concerns expressed by members of the audience:  
 the value of raising salaries at the expense of cutting  
     positions;  
 proposed cuts in the Communications Department;  
 the need for more creative financing;  
 concern about management not leading by example by accepting  
     a salary increase, no middle management and supervisory  
     positions are being eliminated;  
 and much concern about not being able to afford a tax increase in  
     today's economy.

The public hearing meeting adjourned at approximately 10:00 p.m.