

**Finance Committee Meeting**  
**March 13, 2013**  
**7:30 PM**  
**Municipal Center – Selectmen's Conference Room**

**Present:** Chair, Lee Tarantino; Vice-Chair, Michael Flaherty; Peter Carignan; Thomas DeLuca; Richard Dorney; Paul Helmreich; William Rotondi; Michael Thomas.  
Also present: Town Manager, Michael Yunits.

**Absent:** Jackie Desrochers; Stephen Evans.

**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 March 11, 2013 Finance Committee minutes as amended. Seconded by Mr. DeLuca. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

**II. New Business**

**FY14 Departmental Budget Proposals:**

School Budget #300 –

Dr. Chris Martes, Interim Superintendent, Mr. Barry Nectow, Director of Finance, and Ms. Jeanne Sullivan, Director of Special Education, addressed the Finance Committee with the FY14 proposed budget, via a PowerPoint presentation, as follows:

The School Department is facing 5 challenges: Contractual Salary Obligations, Special Education Mandated Costs, Transportation Expenses, Facilities Expenses, and Possible Sequestration Budget Reductions.

- *Contractual Salary Obligations* – This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a three-year contract. The EDUJOBS Grant in the amount of \$290K, which has been used to fund salaries for the past few years, is on its last year.
- *Special Education Mandated Costs* – The Circuit Breaker (reimburses 70% of placement costs, once it exceeds \$40K, will be level-funded). Dr. Martes noted that Special Education tuition costs continue to rise. He also noted that students with Autism Spectrum Disorder continues to rise as well.
- *Transportation Expenses* – The contract with the transportation company will expire June 30<sup>th</sup>. It is anticipated that the new contract will include a 5% increase.
- *Facilities Expenses* – There are 5 school buildings and it was noted that most of the facilities costs go towards the HVAC systems. This part of the budget has been level-funded at \$298,440.
- *Possible Sequestration Budget Reductions* – The Sequestration cuts may affect 3 grants – Title I, Title IIa, and Federal Special Education. The total cut would yield an increase of \$120K to the budget.

Dr. Martes said that the total requested budget for FY14 is \$24,567,620. He noted that this is an increase of \$1,559,746 over FY13 and is a level-services budget (with the addition of the proposed cost-avoidance Autism Program).

Autism Program - Dr. Martes explained that the School Department would like to add a program to the FY14 school year and beyond. The program would address the needs of students on the Autism Spectrum. He said at this point there are 2 students in grades K-1 that have been identified as being in need of services as well as students who are presently in the Project Early preschool program who would also be in need of this program. It would be located at the LG Nourse School and would require a teacher and 2 paraprofessionals.

The total cost of the program would be \$96,277. If these students were to be placed out-of-district the cost would be between \$113,600 and \$150,000.

This program would continue beyond FY14 and ideally take in students from other districts.

Awards – Dr. Martes reported that both the Yelle Elementary and the Middle Schools have been awarded a Level I for their top scores on MCAS. Also, Norton High School is one of 46 high schools in the Commonwealth that has been awarded for having an increase of AP courses.

Mr. DeLuca asked Dr. Martes where any left-over funds go at the end of the fiscal year. Dr. Martes said that sometimes they are given back and sometimes districts will choose to pay out-of-district costs early.

Mr. Thomas asked that Dr. Martes provide the FinCom with the information from the bids for the transportation contract when available.

Mr. Yunits asked if there are plans for a space study of the school buildings because over the past 6 years the student enrollment has decreased by 391 students. Dr. Martes said that he does not have any plans for it, but the incoming superintendent may be interested in doing so.

A discussion was had on the impact of the Charter School enrollment. Dr. Martes said that the projected 188 students will be costing the town \$1.8M for FY14. He guessed that Norton has the largest ratio in the state for students in a Charter School. Mr. Deniz Savas, School Committee member, pointed out that there is great savings to be had in keeping students in Norton schools. He mentioned that one of, if not *the*, largest factor in this is full-day kindergarten. The Charter School provides free full-day kindergarten while Norton Public Schools provide it with a cost.

#### Town Clerk #161 –

Ms. Danielle Sicard, Town Clerk, addressed the FinCom on this budget noting that the salaries portion includes a 2% increase like all other town departments. She noted that in FY11 and FY12 she received a 0% increase in salary.

Under Expenses, Ms. Sicard pointed out that there some slight increases due to the new dog licensing software. She said that this software has brought in more revenue for the town.

#### Elections #162 –

Ms. Sicard explained that this budget is much lower than last year because there is not a presidential election this year.

It was noted that Expenses are increased this year because of repair and maintenance.

There was a discussion on where the Dog Licensing line item should go. Mr. Tarantino said that he would like to see it in the Town Clerk's budget, not Elections.

#### Recreation #630 –

The request for Expenses is \$10K, which is \$50 more than FY13. Mr. Yunits said that the department also requested \$3K for salaries but that he is not recommending it at this time.

#### **Finance Committee Reserve Fund Transfer – Town Clerk:**

Ms. Sicard explained that the department overspent by \$1,400 but saved on Data Processing, so the request is for \$1K. She went on to explain that the extra personnel hours are due to a ballot box malfunction. This caused elections workers to have to hand count all the write-in votes.

A request was also made to fund a storage container for voting booths during the high school construction. The cost of this would be \$465.

Also, Ms. Sicard made a request for transport carts for \$2,100 for voting booths. Mr. DeLuca said he felt that this item was more appropriate for Special Town Meeting, not a Reserve transfer.

**Motion** was made by Mr. Helmreich to transfer \$1,465 from the Finance Committee Reserve Fund to Town Clerk/Elections for a storage container and for Salaries. Seconded by Mr. Flaherty. Vote: All in favor, with Mr. Thomas abstaining. **Motion carries.**

### **III. Old Business**

#### Codification Update from the Town Clerk –

Ms. Sicard updated the FinCom on the codification program that was approved and funded last year at town meeting. She said that the contract for services has been awarded to General Code. She has met with them and said that most of the project will happen this December and will be completed in May 2015.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for March 18, 2013 at 7:30 pm.

### **Adjournment**

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

**Documents Referenced:** Minutes of March 11, 2013  
Budget materials for departments: #300 (Schools), #161 (Town Clerk), #162 (Elections), and #630 (Recreation)

Respectfully Submitted by:

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**Lee Tarantino, Finance Committee Chair**

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**Date Approved**

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**Sara Lyons, Finance Committee Secretary**