

Finance Committee Meeting
March 23, 2016
7:00 PM
Municipal Center – Selectmen’s Conference Room

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

Absent: Jackie Desrochers; Michael Thomas.

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm. The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

I. Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Mr. DeLuca to approve the March 9, 2016 Finance Committee minutes as written. Seconded by Mr. Helmreich. Vote: All in favor. **Motion carries.**

II. New Business

FY17 Departmental Budget proposals were reviewed and discussed as follows:

#306 – Southeastern Vocational Technical School

Mr. Mark Morris, Business Manager for Southeastern Vocational Technical School, addressed the FinCom regarding the FY17 assessment. He stated that the total assessment for Norton is \$980,213, which is down by \$163,761. Mr. Morris noted that the enrollment from Norton has dropped 16 students (from 105 to 89).

#300 – School Department

Dr. Baeta, Superintendent of Norton Public Schools, addressed the FinCom regarding the FY17 budget proposal. He said that the motivation for the proposed budget continues to be the Schools Strategic Plan – Academic Success for All, Enrichment Opportunities, Investment in Staff, and Source of Pride for the Community.

Dr. Baeta shared that Norton High School has recently been named a Level One school for the first time ever.

He also noted that the article for an override vote has been withdrawn from the Annual Town Meeting and will be placed on a Special Town Meeting warrant.

Dr. Baeta stated that the proposed budget that includes a \$3.1M increase, would keep all staff, contractual obligations, add tuition-free Full-day Kindergarten, and additional positions that are needed.

Dr. Baeta noted that \$207,200 has been collected from School Choice fees this year. He said that these funds are not being included in the budget because it is a constantly changing number that can’t be depended upon to budget with from year to year.

Dr. Baeta stated that the Chapter 70 funding has been decreased by \$319K for FY17.

Dr. Baeta provided the FinCom with a handout showing how there would still be a need for an increase of \$1,651,754 to just provide a level-service budget, for a total of \$26,832,755. He also noted some possibilities for making up the difference, which include increase in user fees, increase class sizes at the elementary level, and removing the “team” approach at the Middle School.

Dr. Baeta stated that there are 466 students enrolled in Special Education programs and that funding is mandated. He also noted that the Circuit Breaker only reimburses 70%. He said that Transportation has gone out to bid, so what is in the budget is conservative to be safe.

Mr. Helmreich pointed out that the budget includes 2.2 new positions that are mandated by the state and will cost \$128K.

Dr. Baeta said that a lot of positions are .5 positions, so that the town does not have to pay healthcare. He also addressed the talk of declining enrollment saying that it has gone down a bit but then has come back up. He said that anticipated enrollment predictions are off by about 100 students, specifically kindergarten enrollment which had been predicted to drop. He also discussed the impact that the new, large housing project on Rt.123 will have on school enrollment.

Mr. DeLuca requested that Dr. Baeta provide the FinCom with the capacity at each school.

#161 – Town Clerk

Mr. Yunits reviewed the proposed Town Clerk budget but noted that it will be changed due to the changeover of the Town clerk position. He said that the hiring salary for the position will be \$60K, which is about \$1,477 less than what it would've been if the Clerk had stayed. He also said that other areas such as conferences and census will be reduced and that he would provide a revised budget proposal in the next couple of weeks.

III. Old Business

FY17 Budget Reductions:

Mr. Yunits provided the FinCom with a handout outlining the reductions he is proposing in various town departments. He stated that there was a need to reduce by \$657,577 and that so far he has reduced it by \$614,577 with \$42,970 to go.

He noted that most of the reductions are from overtime for Police and Fire. Mr. Yunits also pointed out that reducing the budget and choosing where to make cuts is going to be very hard because most departments consist of only one or two people. He said that he would have a fully balanced budget at next week's meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for March 30, 2016 at 7:00 pm.

Adjournment

Motion was made by Mr. Tarantino to adjourn at 8pm. Seconded by Mr. Fiore. Vote: Unanimous.
Motion carries.

Documents Referenced:

Minutes of March 9, 2016
FY17 Departmental budget proposals
Supplemental materials for the School Department Budget
Graphs and spreadsheets for the Southeastern VoTech presentation

Respectfully Submitted by: _____

Stephen Evans, Finance Committee Chair

Date Approved

Sara Lyons, Finance Committee Secretary