

**Finance Committee
Minutes of March 28, 2016**

Present from the Finance Committee: Chairman Louise Tremblay, Bob Corey, Ed Pitta, Gerald D'Avolio, Joseph DiCarlo, Helen Hamel and Richard Ahern. Also present: Town Manager, James A. Duggan, Ann Vandal, Assistant Town Manager, Diane Daigle, Accountant and Recording Secretary Samantha Carver. The meeting was held at Town Hall Conference Room 2nd floor, 62 Arlington Street, Dracut, MA.

Also present: Superintendent of Schools Steve Stone and William Frangiamore, Business Manager

Mrs. Tremblay opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed the Superintendent and Business Manager.

Mr. Stone began his presentation on the School's budget and stated that the budget is 1.73% above net school spending. He talked about the special education transfers outside the network at 3.93%. He talked about the overall budget being 1.88% above the FY16 budget which includes three positions but they are reinstatements from previous layoffs. The Committee asked questions about page four of the power point handout. Superintendent Stone stated they are trying to save on costs by having part time employees.

Mr. Duggan asked what the student population was currently. Mr. Stone responded that there are 3,650 students and 49 students are out of district. Mr. Pitta asked about per pupil spending. Mr. Stone responded that the per-pupil spending for Dracut is \$11,713 per student which is below other districts. Mr. D'Avolio asked if there was a way to see a breakdown of the costs for the out of district students. Mr. Stone responded that there is not because it violates the student privacy rights. Mr. D'Avolio stated there must be some type of formula or something to look at without knowing anything about the student. Mr. Stone stated he could send a link to the OSD program overseen by the State.

The Committee continued their discussion on the school budget. There was a discussion on the special ed program and how the district is responsible to provide assistance until the student is twenty-two years old. Mr. Stone stated that when the new high school was built they repurposed the special education suite to service those students saving on average \$145,000 a year. Mr. Stone stated that because Dracut is an affordable community people move in with the special needs students and this actually cost the school system money. He mentioned that they have five students that have recently moved into the community which the school system will have to provide special education for which was not accounted for in this budget.

The Committee asked several questions on the non-union contracts and increases. Mr. Stone explained that a lot of times they move the staff to different schools and you'll see the budget fluctuate because the staff goes from one school to the other so it's taken out of one budget and put into another.

There was a discussion on last year's transportation deficit and if that were the case this year. Mr. Stone explained that transportation is in a separate budget and there is a deficit which they are looking to make it up but it won't be the same issue as last year. They should be able to manage their budget without layoffs this year. The Committee asked about the override that the School is hoping to get and what that would be used for. Mr. Stone stated it would be used for wireless technology in year one and then in later years they are hoping to add three counselors. Currently they have one counselor, Mrs. Edwards that rotates between four elementary schools. Mr. Stone mentioned that they believe they can absorb the additional cost with the school choice and the circuit breaker.

The Committee thanked Superintendent Stone and Business Manager Frangiamore for their presentation.

Mr. Duggan began discussion on the Council on Aging budget which Bethany Loveless was present for. He stated that the budget is pretty much level funded except for contractual obligations. Mrs. Loveless talked about the assistance that she has received from the Friend of the Council on Aging recently purchasing three flat screen televisions so they could get rid of the outdated bingo board. They have also helped with materials constructing the new space for the Veterans Agent who is now located at the Council on Aging.

Mr. Duggan discussed the library budget which Nanci Hill the Director of the Library was present. Mr. Duggan discussed the budget as level funded. There was a discussion with the Library Director on the technology at the library. Ms. Hill stated that they have formally put in a request through the Capital Plan for a five year technology implementation plan. The first phase is approximately \$130,000. There was a brief discussion on the children's programs offered at the library and Ms. Hill stated that they are offered all week and are very popular during school vacation weeks. All programs are funded by the Friends of the Library and some of their money is from their annual book sale.

The Committee continued to go through the remaining budgets in the book. There was discussion on Greater Lowell's budget and whether a meeting was needed. It was determined that they would request a copy of the budget and if the Committee after reviewing it needed to meet with Greater Lowell a meeting would be called.

Minutes

The Committee reviewed the minutes of March 7, 2016. Mr. Pitta made a motion to approve the minutes of March 7, 2016 as presented. Mr. Corey seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mr. Corey made a motion to approve the minutes of March 21, 2016 as presented. Mr. DiCarlo seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn

Mr. Corey made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:24 p.m. Mr. DiCarlo seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Yvonne Tremblay
John G. ...
Don B. Hamel

Edward J. Pitta
Richard J. ...