

Tri-Board Meeting
Board of Selectmen, Dracut School Committee, Finance Committee
January 19, 2016
Dracut High School Auditorium

Board of Selectmen Present – Tony Archinski, Tami Dristiliaris, Alison Hughes, Joseph DiRocco, Jr., Cathy Richardson and Recording Secretary Shannon Rowe Beaulieu

Dracut School Committee Present – Matthew Sheehan, Dr. Michael McNamara, Betsy Murphy, Joe Wilkie and Daniel O’Connell

Finance Committee Present – Louise Tremblay, Joe Herlihy, Edward Pitta, Joe DiCarlo, Helen Hamel and Gerald D’Avolio, Jr.

Mr. Archinski opened the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

Mr. Archinski explained the make-up of the Tri-Board and of the Joint Budget Task Force Committee. Mr. Archinski discussed three possible revenue options; a trash fee, debt exclusion for technology and an override. Mr. Archinski explained that this is a public forum and the Tri-Board would like to hear suggestions, points, etc. from the residents. Mr. Archinski explain the ground rules for the public forum.

Joint Budget Task Force (JBTF) Final Report – Selectwoman Alison Hughes

Mrs. Hughes explained the charge of the JBTF and discussed the expenses and revenues over the next five years. Mrs. Hughes explained that revenues are growing at 4% and expenditures are growing at 7% per year. Mrs. Hughes explained the 3.3 million dollar deficit in year one and stated that all of the documentation from the JBTF is online on the Town’s website

Summary of Options – Jim Duggan, Town Manager

Mr. Duggan reviewed and explained the chart for the audience. Mr. Duggan discussed a proposed debt exclusion for an investment in technology based on a five year schedule. Mr. Duggan discussed a proposed override and reviewed the proposed numbers. Mr. Duggan explained how an override works and the impact to homeowners. Mr. Duggan explained how an override would be billed the first year and then subsequent years after. Mr. Duggan discussed a proposed trash fee which was introduced last year by Dr. McNamara. Mr. Duggan discussed the administrative costs to implement the billing, uncollectible accounts, possible exemptions, Board of Health involvement and the need to adopt rules and regulations for trash haulers and monitoring. Mr. Duggan summarized the three proposed scenarios for the audience.

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Public Input

* Brian Bond, 161 Surrey Lane – appeared before the Board and thanked the volunteers for their time. Mr. Bond suggested splitting the tax rate by lowering the residential tax rate and increasing the business tax rate, approving the override and bringing the residential tax rate back up over time. Mr. Bond stated that business' can afford the increase and suggested liquidating Town owned property. Mr. Bond discussed the 8% Administrative raise at the School Department, Elected Officials being rehired, miss-use of 61A Farm Land status and the Town paying for Elected Officials health insurance. Mr. Bond stated that the Board's needed to reestablish confidence in the residents.

* Paul Aubrey-Cadieux, 46 Marsh Hill Road – Mr. Cadieux appeared before the Board and questioned if the debt exclusion was just for technology or if technology was also included in the override numbers? Mr. Cadieux questioned what the items are that are needed and asked if there are any other options for increasing revenue.

* Karen Merrill, 7 Clyde Avenue – Mrs. Merrill appeared before the Board and suggested that they keep trying to preserve land. Mrs. Merrill discussed the debt exclusion for technology and suggested improving the Town owned buildings instead. Mrs. Merrill discussed improving efficiencies in the buildings, improving recycling and suggested a risk assessment for the School Department. Mrs. Merrill also discussed splitting the tax rate and including apartments in the commercial tax rate. Mrs. Merrill stated that all money needs to be spent wisely.

* Rich Cowan, 12 Greenlawn Avenue – Mr. Cowan appeared before the Board and stated that he concurs with most of the comments already given. Mr. Cowan discussed improving buildings, improving recycling and stated that the Town would not get much from a split tax rate. Mr. Cowan discussed paying attention to the proposed trash fee, discussed fee's for a full trash barrel versus a half full trash barrel and encouraging residents to recycle. Mr. Cowan discussed the way the budget is completed which now leads to the schools always being underfunded, residents having less children in the school system and tax base history. Mr. Cowan discussed the increased salary of Superintendent Stone and discussed thinking about the big picture. Mr. Cowan stated that the Board's need to work together and stated that Dracut is spending less than other Town's. Mr. Cowan discussed the Town of Grafton's override.

* Allison Volpe, 32 Clement Road – Mrs. Volpe appeared before the Board and stated that she was really happy to see the information being presented. Mrs. Volpe stated that she would like the School Committee to have a risk assessment completed of the School Department. Mrs. Volpe stated that she was against a split override and discussed everyone being in this together as a whole Town. Mrs. Volpe discussed the audits already being completed for the schools but asked the School Committee again to approve an individual risk assessment for transparency.

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* Rebecca Sullivan, 12 Radcliffe Road – Ms. Sullivan appeared before the Board and discussed a tax rate split and stated that she didn't mind paying for services. Ms. Sullivan discussed the technology debt exclusion and asked that the Board's use the money wisely. Ms. Sullivan stated that the Board's need to do their end by getting revenue into the Town.

* Brenda Kline, 106 Meadow Creek Drive – Ms. Kline appeared before the Board and thanked the JBTF for all of their work. Ms. Kline stated that she is a supporter of an override and technology, as technology is very important. Ms. Kline stated that investing is needed and everyone needs to work together. Ms. Kline stated that we get what we pay for and stated that the School Administration Building is potentially a great piece of land for revenue.

* Mike Sancartier, 30 Diamond Drive – Mr. Sancartier appeared before the Board and discussed the results of the study. Mr. Sancartier stated that this is a golden opportunity to move forward and to unite behind one proposal to the Community. Mr. Sancartier discussed the High School renovation accomplishment and discussed the recent 8% raise given to the Superintendent. Mr. Sancartier stated that he feels as though the School Committee explained the reasoning behind the Superintendent's raise and discussed the raise given to the Former Town Manager, Dennis Piendak, four years ago. Mr. Sancartier stated that it was time to come forward and come together and stated that he has confidence in the group to do so.

* Christopher Craig, 93 Parker Road – Mr. Craig appeared before the Board and discussed the amount of overtime of the Police Department. Mr. Craig stated that if two more Patrolman were hired it would cut costs. Mr. Craig asked how much the percentage is for retiree health care as well as employee health care?

* Jesse Forcier, 211 Parker Road – Mr. Forcier appeared before the Board and thanked everyone for all of their hard work. Mr. Forcier asked if the JBTF looked into an override with the Community Preservation Act (CPA) tax? Mr. Forcier asked the Board to look at the numbers for how much could be raised if the Town reduced its current CPA tax and instead used some of the CPA money through an override to other services. Mr. Forcier stated that the Community Preservation Committee does amazing things but this could help lessen the burden on the taxpayers.

* Anna Corey, 215 Jones Avenue – Mrs. Corey appeared before the Board and stated that she is all for moving the Town forward and discussed the residents supporting the Town. Mrs. Corey suggested looking at the health care benefits and bigger health care deductibles for Town employees. Mrs. Corey discussed the School Department's needs and getting them whatever they need.

* Leo McMahon, 215 Lexington Road – Mr. McMahon appeared before the Board and disclosed that he is the President of the Dracut Firefighters Union and discussed how a debt exclusion works. Mr. McMahon discussed the need for technology at the Fire Department which would move the Department forward.

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Mr. McMahon discussed the override and stated that it is needed for staffing. Mr. McMahon discussed the need for additional staffing at the Fire Department and his experiences as a Firefighter with having only two Firefighters at each station per shift. Mr. McMahon discussed the need for moving the Department forward and putting Public Safety in a better place.

* Angel Bacigalupo, 39 Roosevelt Avenue – Ms. Bacigalupo appeared before the Board and stated that a lot of residents are in agreement and the Board needs to make a unified decision. Ms. Bacigalupo discussed the children in the school's needing services and discussed the proposed trash fee. Ms. Bacigalupo stated that she paid the bus fee for this year and stated that a split tax rate is absolutely necessary. Ms. Bacigalupo also suggested that the Board introduce themselves to the audience.

* Kelly Petka, 18 Roosevelt Avenue – Ms. Petka appeared before the Board and commended all of the members for taking a huge step for Dracut. Ms. Petka stated that this is one Town, should have one solution and one recommendation.

* Steve Chaput, 80 Baldwin Road – Mr. Chaput appeared before the Board and thanked them for all of their work. Mr. Chaput stated that he is a thirty year employee of the Dracut Police Department and discussed everyone having to come together and put the needs of the Town as a whole. Mr. Chaput stated that it is bad politics to have split override ballot questions.

* Joe Bigos, 281 Colburn Avenue – Mr. Bigos appeared before the Board and thanked them for their work. Mr. Bigos discussed having one plan and asked where would the money be going? Mr. Bigos discussed the increased school fees, loss of music classes, the Police and Fire Department's being severely underfunded and the need for residents to understand the big picture.

Tri-Board Discussion – Where do we go from here?

Mr. Archinski thanked all of the speakers and stated that the Board has heard their concerns and noted their questions.

Ms. Richardson suggested that the Board introduce themselves to the audience as requested by a previous speaker.

The Tri-Board introduced themselves to the audience.

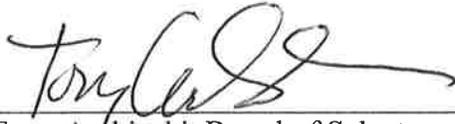
Mr. Archinski stated that the members would be taking all of the information from tonight's public forum to their respective Board's and the Tri-Board would reconvene for further discussion.

Adjournment

Motion made by Mrs. Murphy to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Mrs. Hughes.
Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Tri-Board Committee



Tony Archinski, Board of Selectmen



Betsy Murphy, School Committee



Louise Tremblay, Finance Committee