Joint Budget Task Force Committee
Minutes of October 5, 2015
Selectmen's Chamber, Town Hall

Present for Board of Selectmen: Alison Hughes, Tony Archinski, Jim Duggan, Town Manager and Recording Secretary Shannon Rowe Beaulieu

Present for School Committee: Betsy Murphy, Michael McNamara, Steven Stone, Superintendent of Schools and Bill Frangiamore, Business Manager

Present for Finance Committee: Louise Tremblay and Bob Corey

Mrs. Hughes opened the meeting at 5:42 p.m.

Continued Review of "Draft" School 5 Year Expenditure Projections

Superintendent Stone stated that the public could access the presentation on the School Department's website.

Superintendent Stone discussed the projected expense increases for FY17-21 including, salaries, instructionally focused expenses, other non-instructionally focused expenses, chargebacks, tuitions and utilities.

Dr. McNamara stated that the Teachers are still outstanding with Collective Bargaining.

Superintendent Stone discussed chargebacks for health insurance, property insurance and discussed the average over the last 5 years.

Mr. Duggan discussed the net metering credit and phase II to the program. Mr. Duggan discussed the 30% net metering credit reduction by the Department of Public Utilities and stated that they should start showing savings in the public buildings.

Superintendent Stone discussed the Salaries & Expenses Total Draft Projections, discussed Central Administration cost and stated that they included technology costs starting in FY13.

Superintendent Stone discussed 1000 series costs including Total Administration and discussed 2000 series costs including Total Supervision, Principalship, Teaching, Professional Development, Textbooks, Library, Media Services, Guidance and Psychological Services.

Mr. Duggan discussed the end of Stimulus money in FY12. Mr. Duggan discussed the investments in FY09 with Stimulus money.

Superintendent Stone discussed the Stimulus money and half being spent on salaries and half being spent on expenses.

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Dr. McNamara discussed when Superintendent Stone was hired in FY11, he stopped all spending in October and had to sign all purchase orders in order to get a handle on spending.

Superintendent Stone discussed the loss in staff after FY12 and discussed also having to cut Professional Development.

Superintendent Stone stated that they purchased textbooks in FY14 and discussed the textbook replenishment cycle.

Superintendent Stone stated that in FY14-FY15 they added Naviance; an online program for College applications, etc.

Superintendent Stone discussed having 2 school Psychologists on staff purely completing evaluations.

Superintendent Stone discussed 3000 series costs including Pupil Services (NSS), Non Pupil Services (non NSS) and Total Pupil Services.

Mr. Frangiamore discussed net school spending and what the State requires per child.

Superintendent discussed non net school spending including transportation and crossing guards.

The Committee discussed how net school spending works.

Mr. Duggan asked if chargebacks were all General Funds? Mr. Frangiamore stated yes.

Superintendent Stone discussed Special Education transportation and Dracut Public Schools transportation.

Superintendent Stone discussed 4000 series costs including Total Operation and Maintenance and 9000 series costs including Total Tuition Expenses.

Superintendent Stone discussed the Circuit Breaker costs

Superintendent Stone discussed a future Special Education classroom in the Elementary Schools, how Special Education looks at Municipalities first and providing Special Education until a student turns 22 years of age.

Superintendent Stone discussed 10,000 series costs including Collective Bargaining and discussed the outstanding Teachers contract.

Superintendent Stone discussed 5000 series costs including chargebacks.

Superintendent Stone stated that salaries were added in appropriate places, discussed wish list projections, chargebacks and total expenses and salaries.

Superintendent Stone discussed transportation fee's which can't be used anywhere else and discussed school choice revenues being able to be used in other places.

Superintendent Stone stated that the schools are not allowed to have Stabilization funds.

Superintendent Stone discussed the school choice revolving fund, starting the budget preparation in October and having the preliminary budget number in late January.

Superintendent Stone discussed the appropriation numbers from the Town, how the School Departments budget works, 240 grant funding of tuitions and Circuit Breaker reimbursement at 60%.

Superintendent Stone discussed IDEA, the Title 1 program, Collective Bargaining and stated that Substitute Teachers are included in the 2000 series costs.

Public Input

Mrs. Susan Koufogazos, 22 Blackberry Fields Road, appeared before the Committee and stated that this is the essence of why this Committee is doing this. Mrs. Koufogazos asked how net school spending is figured? Superintendent Stone stated that the State provides the minimum number for net school spending. Dr. McNamara stated that the average spent above net school spending is 20%. Mr. Duggan stated that the Town is $600,000 above net school spending.

Dr. McNamara discussed what the Town could spend above net school spending is a function of revenue.

Mr. Duggan discussed assessed values in other Communities compared to Dracut.

Mrs. Hughes discussed the net school spending formula and net school spending not just being a formula it's a baseline.

Mrs. Koufogazos stated that this was a great clarifying meeting.

Mr. Duggan discussed the State and Federal levels not going to fix the net school spending formula.

Mrs. Koufogazos asked questions in regards to surplus funds within the State. Mr. Duggan stated that the State would look at surplus funds for their needs not for local Town's needs.

Selectwoman Cathy Richardson appeared before the Committee to discussed dropout rates and the percentage of students moving onto College. Superintendent Stone stated that there is a 2.5% to 2.6% drop out rate.

Ms. Tremblay left the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Superintendent Stone discussed the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) foundation Budget.

Ms. Richardson discussed the Circuit Breaker and stated that they should send a letter stating that the Circuit Breaker should be 100% reimbursed not 72% reimbursed.

Ms. Richardson discussed the Title 1 program and Social Services staff and asked if the School Department is billing Insurance Companies for their services. Superintendent Stone stated that they have successfully been reimbursed for services from Medicare.

Ms. Richardson suggested that they review the ABE Transitional program through Lowell for students with those needs. Superintendent Stone discussed the Lighthouse School and the Valley Collaborative.

Old Business

Dr. McNamara discussed the Committee having a better handle with all the information being presented and it is good to get the information out to the public.

Mrs. Hughes discussed putting all of the revenue and expenditure projections into one document for the Committee's review. Mrs. Hughes discussed reviewing each fiscal year individually.

Mr. Duggan stated that Mrs. Vandal, Superintendent Stone, Bill Frangiamore and he would get together and put all of the information into a simplified spreadsheet.

Mr. Archinski discussed creating an Executive Summary with a glossary of terms with the simplified spreadsheet.

Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

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Alison Hughes

Tony Archinski

Betsy Murphy

Dr. Michael McNamara

Louise Tremblay

Bob Corey