



FINANCE COMMITTEE
Town of Grafton
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GRAFTON, MA

April 09, 2008
Public Meeting of the Finance Committee
7:00 P.M.

Doris Metivier opened the public meeting at 7:01 P.M. and stated that the Finance Committee has not met to discuss the Recreation Department budget. She then handed the meeting over to Town Administrator Natalie Lashmit.

Finance Committee Members present:

Fred Churchill, Bob Foley (7:24 P.M.), Doris Metivier, Sandy Merrill, Gary Murray, Sue Robbins, Dave Ross

Finance Committee Member absent:

Don Davison

Also present for the round table discussion to review the area of budget cuts are members of the Board of Selectmen, members of the School Committee, and Superintendent of Schools Joe Connors.

Town Administrator Natalie Lashmit met with the Finance Committee, Superintendent of Schools, and members of the School Committee to discuss the FY09 budget.

5.42% increase

Health Care concerns are the major driver.

57 new benefits plans were added to the roll in the past year.

5.7% increase in the benefits in health care is predicted for this year.

Retirees are allowed health care for singles and families and a new hire is offered the same benefits.

Ways to cut

Recreation did come up in the discussion during the week.

Closing two branch libraries results in a cut of about \$65,000.

14.5% of total employees to be cut on the Municipal side—difficult to achieve.

Unsettled number

Fiscally responsible concerns:

Health Insurance

Infrastructure needs to be noted this year

Post-employment benefits—how well have we funded this obligation?

Nothing has been set aside for this.

A school space problem exists and we have to plan towards future development.

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Town of Grafton citizens pay 92% of the taxes.

Solution: Stick to the budget with difficult decisions.

Donna Stock spoke.

5 hour meeting to discuss budget deliberations

\$883,000 target

Looked at fees to implement to meet the bottom line

Two sets of fees:

Parking permit fee—\$200 per year for high school students

Busing fee—\$200 with a \$400 cap per family

Non-personnel cuts, first tier

Personnel—eliminate new positions from the March 24, 2008 budget

Personnel

\$368,000

Custodian

\$459,000

Current staff positions

Library

\$548,164

6th tier

\$644,070

7th tier

\$753,850

8th tier

\$872,304

A total of 19.3 personnel

Close to \$21 mil 525,000, a .6 increase over last year's budget

The School Committee is representing the children.

Salary negotiations contracts will be coming up and that is not included in the School's budget.

Doris Metivier

The \$21 million

Includes the \$628,445 and no funds are set aside for the negotiations

Dr. Connors spoke:

The request was to look at reducing the \$883,122 figure.

At \$100,000 increments

The best case is \$883,122.

The worst case scenario is 1.5 million dollars.

1.1 million dollars, limited resources and difficult times

Concern that all of the budget cuts are on the school side:

Less services /back to the basics

Equity in feeling this pain
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60% School budget
 80/20 split is the suggestion
 80 from the school and 20 from the municipal side, between 883 and 1.1

Town side cuts

1st tier

Together We Can

Concerts on the common

Silver Lake, MA

Hennessey conservation

Gas, plumbing and wiring inspector payment

\$26,815

2nd tier

Recreation budget

Self funding fees

\$40,000

3rd tier

Part time impacted people

Stipends for vehicles

Council on Aging (\$10,000)

Conservation (staff to half time)

ZBA shared half time with Conservation

Local inspector to 24 hours

Library, freeze on part time

Close the recycling center

\$30,000

4th tier

Part time custodian

Board of Selectmen assistant to part time

Assistant to Town Administrator

Closing Silver Lake (state grant implications-legal constraints)

Weeks of operation

Highway new position

Police officer (currently not filled)

Training funds

Council on Aging bus driver reduction

Senior tax work off program

Health – nurse

New cruiser

Cruiser lap tops

Legal –

IT hours reduced

Veterans benefits

Nelson Library

Street lights off

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Engineering assistant

Board of Assessors, 1 position

Town clerk, 3 to 2

14.8% of staff

Brings us to the \$883,122 reduction

Sue Robbins

The department heads were asked to present a 2% or 0% budget and they brought in a minimalist budget.

Additional cuts were made from the Town Administrator

Co-Chairs from the Finance Committee made more cuts.

Everyone is impacted in the Town.

Donna Stock

Many communities are feeling the lack of support from the state as well as Grafton.

No votes were taken from the School Committee and they could implement the amount of cuts of \$883,000.

Board of Selectmen

Brook Padgett and Dr. Connors

The first 3 tiers are not actual existing positions.

These tiers represent supplies and materials, and new staff and existing services.

School budget positions that are new vs. existing positions

Exchange positions are acceptable

Two and above are new positions in the budget.

Compare apples to apples.

It is not 0/0 in an operating budget.

Health insurance is now included in the school budget.

Not services that you were hoping to get; we need to work with the actual cuts.

Sue Robbins

10.9% budget included anticipated funds for salary increases effective January 09, 2008.

Non-encumbered funds were transferred to other areas this year.

The School states that they are not in the budget for FY09 and that they are making the transfers now (basically spending down the current FY08 funds so that there will not be funds left over to add to the free cash fund (stated by Dr. Connors).

Reserved for wages in two accounts

In article that the town votes for

The Town Administrator removed the figure and will be added to the figure

1.5 million

The number to be provided to the schools including the article

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\$620,000 voted to the town in an article must go directly to the schools—the schools can do whatever with these funds.

Wages set aside to the town must go to the particular line items.

Any funds left over must roll into free cash.

Donna Stock

Priority 9

Priority 10

\$161,000

Priority 11

28.4 staff

Accreditation is in 2011.

A red flag

Put on warning because of the building itself and with additional teacher cuts.

Reading

Fundamental concerns

Fred Churchill questioned where we need to get to, to come in with a balanced budget.

Supt. Connors

And the delta number is

22mil 406057 and the difference 20894490 1.51167.

- 628, 445 set aside for negotiations

Negotiated raises that are pending.

Teachers and custodians must agree to a 0% for FY09.

These negotiations are pending.

\$1.5 million is worst and the \$883,000 is the best case scenario.

The Town Administrator said the gap is the larger number. The funds can be reallocated and the funds are up to the schools' discretion.

School- Cut through priority 8 will be

Municipal center has set aside \$311,429 for salary increases.

Open contracts

Where does the 625,000.00 come from?

And if there is an agreement that the \$300,000 will come back to the town

Brook Padgett

Due to the health care accounting

60% is a true accounting of what it costs to run the School Department.

It was not accounted for in the past.

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Prioritized the list of reductions

Bob Foley

The School is okay with the \$883,000 in cuts

Town Administrator

The municipal center budget is based on town meeting.

Net school spending equals

School budget plus 3 million on the town side

Donna Stock

Teachers vs. the beach

Doris

Natalie and Joe

You will have to get together and continue discussion

Sue

Town Administrator \$21 million

Doris opened the floor to discussion:

Scott Browne

Busing fee, \$200

Pay As You Throw, \$200

500 taxes per year

and 400 in 2 days.

To the Town

1 million dollars for FY10

This has to go to Free Cash

These funds are going to be set aside for next fiscal year.

Bob Berger

Cutting the local inspector

Not based on new homes but all inspections

Self funding plus a sum back to the town

Lisa Rice

Proactive plan to raise funds

School budget

Community

Town vs. School

It's the Town.

Raising revenue vs. commercial space?

Meghan McDonald

Moved to Grafton for the school system

Education is first—children need to come first

Town is second, school should be first

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Jennifer O'Neill

Seniors can't afford the raise in taxes.

Get creative

Economic growth

As the Assessor, sees the hardships

Michelle Drumm

Council on Aging and children in the schools

Police

Road improvement

Budget crunch is new to the School Department.

Peter Parson

Must do 's in the town

Like to do's in the town

Reality

Shrewsbury is collecting \$800,000 in fees

How are we spending the funds?

Business-like decisions and less emotional decisions

Bob Foley

Recreation

Town funds the beach—\$75,000 with about 200 people per day.

The rest of the programs are self funding.

Sue Robbins

Level by level for additional cuts with the least impact to the Town.

School is meeting net school spending plus and is not looking for a mediocre school system.

Think about our spending.

There might be a couple of positions that can combine services for the town and school.

It's up to Natalie and Joe to make the final presentation to the town.

Donna Stock

Look at facility management

Joe Connors

No staff to share

Adjournment

Motion: Dave Ross moved that the Finance Committee adjourn the public meeting.

Seconded: Sandy Merrill. All in favor. Motion carries.

The public meeting adjourned at 9:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Fiacco