



FINANCE COMMITTEE
Town of Grafton
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GRAFTON, MA

Finance Committee
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, March 21, 2023
7:00PM
Conference Room A
AND
via Zoom

CALL TO ORDER

The meetings of the Select Board and the Finance Committee were called to order by Chair Colleen Roy and Chair Mark Haddad. In attendance by roll call were Chair Mark Haddad, Vice Chair Greg Marr, Dan Cusher, Victoria Duckworth via Zoom, and Sue Robbins. Select Board members in attendance were Chair Colleen Roy, Clerk Andy Jefferson, Ann Marie Foley, and Ray Mead. Also in attendance were Town Administrator Evan Brassard, Finance Director Mary Lauria, Assistant Town Administrator William Blake, Superintendent James Cummings, and Director of Finance Anita Patel.

TRI-COM MEETING with Representative Muradian to Discuss Chapter 70 Funding

Mr. Brassard presented the following information:

PROJECTION VS. GOVERNOR'S BUDGET

- Town of Grafton built a 3% (\$378,526) increase into Municipal Projections
 - Contained in 5-year projections
 - Belief that State would continue to fund Chapter 70 competitively
- Grafton Public Schools projected a 4.4% (\$518,899) increase in Chapter 70
 - Contained in 5-year projections
 - Belief that Chapter 70 funding would remain viable in high inflation economic landscape
- Governor's Budget projects a 0.7% (\$88,500) increase
 - This is a difference of \$430,399 - \$290,026

Representative David Muradian described the timeline for the budget process and spoke on his intention to help increase this amount of funding.

Dr. Cummings spoke on the increase in tuition for out-of-district students in FY24 that had not been forecasted.

Mr. Haddad described the funding formula's issues and the various amounts that schools will receive. He noted that some households in Grafton cannot afford a large tax increase.

Mr. Marr highlighted that the state aid formula is based on property values and income, but the municipality only collects property taxes. He stated that the only way to make the state contribution to public education equitable is to base it on the amount of income taxes that are paid to the state from each municipality.

Rep. Muradian agreed to relay these concerns and suggested holding another Tri-Committee meeting to try making some changes through MMA or DESE. Mr. Haddad stated that changes to the formula must come from the legislature. Rep. Muradian and Mr. Haddad discussed the logistics of the Student Opportunity Act.

Ms. Roy asked if Rep. Muradian had received a similar call to action from any of the other communities he represents. He responded that he has only met with individuals about this matter. Mr. Marr noted that MMA is calling for a \$100 minimum increase per student in Chapter 70 aid.

Mr. Cusher spoke on the potential for residents to be pushed out of Grafton if they cannot afford an override. He also noted that without an override, other residents may want to move to a town that spends more on education.

Rep. Muradian highlighted the issue of elders being priced out of their hometowns. He spoke on different ways to increase state aid, including revamping the Chapter 70 formula and utilizing sports wagering revenue. He invited members of the Select Board and Finance Committee to contact him if they would like to continue the conversation.

Ms. Robbins spoke on the need for the \$100 increase per student. She stated that they have a responsibility as a town to make sure students get what they need. Rep. Muradian agreed to support that increase and highlighted the need for mental health resources.

Ms. Robbins asked why the governor put so much funding into universities. Rep. Muradian stated that he would reach out when he has more information.

ADJOURN

The Finance Committee meeting was adjourned at 7:35pm.

A full recording of this meeting is available at: <https://youtu.be/sRxdvhcd5LI>