MINUTES
OF THE
FINANCE COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2020
7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM
130 MAIN STREET, SANDWICH, MA

Present: Mark Snyder, Matt Anderson, Bob Guerin, Laura Wing, Nancy Crossman, James McCormick

Absent: Victor Zukauskas, Gwenn Dyson and Jim Pierce

Also Present: Town Manager George Dunham, Finance Director William Jennings, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Pam Gould, School Committee Vice-Chair Kerri Ames and other School Committee members, Selectman Charles Holden, Tao Woolfe/Enterprise and SCTv.

ITEM #1
CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Meeting called to order at 7:00p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

ITEM #2
PUBLIC FORUM

Donald Bader, 7 Anchor Drive, spoke in support of the FY’21 School Dept. Budget.

ITEM #3
REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of February 4, 2020
*Motion was made by Mr. Anderson to approve the minutes of February 4, 2020 as presented. Seconded by Ms. Crossman

VOTE – UNANIMOUS

ITEM #4
CORRESPONDENCE, STATEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

ITEM #5
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS DR. PAM GOULD & SCHOOL COMMITTEE – FY’21
BUDGET PRESENTATION & RELATED ISSUES

Dr. Gould gave an overview of the FY’21 School Dept. budget along with School Committee Vice-Chair Kerri Ames. All information included under ‘Supporting Documents’ at the end of these minutes. Dr. Gould answered and attempted to clear up some misunderstandings.

Mr. Guerin noted that he likes the organization of the presentation but he was interested in the forward looking. We are doing everything we can think of on enrollment. We work with our Legislators on an annual basis. What are they doing to stem-the-tide. Students who live in town are just not going to school here.

Discussion regarding changes that the school department has tried in an attempt to keep students from choosing to attend other schools instead of Sandwich schools. It was noted that it is important to try to have the people involved. Some teaching positions have been eliminated. Some of the teaching personnel decisions are based around the special needs of some of the students. Issues with charter schools vs school choice.
Discussion of the School Capital Budget – we have aging buildings. There is a strategic plan the School Dept. is working on and it has been adjusted as needed. This would not be an issue if we did not have school choice. We need to figure out with parents helping why they choose other schools. The teachers did take two years of ‘0’ as the rest of the town did. We bring in double the number of students than we send out. We still fund eight teachers through school choice. We try to work on the tech budget.

Mr. Anderson noted that the FinCom concerns are not necessarily around the school committee isn’t doing things right. The concern seems to be more that there is no end in sight.

Mr. Guerin suggested maybe think more like long term.

Mr. Anderson – we want the school and the town to thrive…both. The concern, I feel, is that each year we are compounding the numbers for the school system. How do we justify the school money and not neglect the town. How do we move forward and address these issues in the future. Every year we have regulations not funded by the state we have long term fiscal responsibility.

Dr. Gould noted that level service costs more money every year. If we have to keep cutting teachers it will make for larger class rooms. We have major facilities conditions issues. Believes that our school system is equal or better than any other.

Discussion of New England School Development Council (NESDEC) enrollment graph.

Mr. Snyder - if the state paid the way they are supposed to...

Mr. Guerin – we have to look at what is within our control and what are we going to do about it.

Buildings investment capital account…schools are not in good condition. We do the same cycle every year. Would like to see a collaborative effort to decide what we can do together. What are we really going to do differently? Charter School issue is out of our control like the Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical School.

Dr. Gould – I would love that conversation.

Ms. Ames noted that several years ago we had a round table discussion organized by, at the time, Selectperson Susan James. Thinks it would be helpful to everyone if we did it again.

Ms. Wing – after watching the presentation of the school department…schools appear to be ‘between a rock and a hard place’. Asked how is it controlled…children going to charter schools?

Dr. Gould – there is a formula that is not totally understood.

Ms. Wing – is it the same for each town? How about Barnstable…what is the Town of Barnstable doing to keep their students in Barnstable?

Dr. Gould – charter schools were given more openings to allow more students.

Mr. Anderson – we have some work we can do to keep kids in our schools. Salaries…how do we ever control that? How do we slow that down?

Dr. Gould – teachers are hired at lower rates and eventually the salaries go up. When senior teachers retire and we hire lower paid teachers and any savings are just helping us survive.

Mr. Anderson – so, how do we control that…contractual obligations.

Dr. Gould - spoke of the cost of living raise. Teachers are required to get a Master’s Degree…which is a good thing; however, teachers want to be reimbursed for the class plus their increase in pay salary…it is their incentive.

Mr. Anderson – how does the ‘grid’ information presented for the Sandwich schools compare to other towns?

Dr. Gould – We did a massive spread sheet. We are about in the middle. We are paying for all this education for teachers and then sometimes they go elsewhere.

Ms. Ames noted that the municipal departments do similar thing such at training for the Police and Fire Depts. and we all pay for it. It is not a department that brings in money unlike other town departments.

Mr. Guerin - except money from school choice…which is a windfall.

Mr. McCormick noted that he was a superintendent for many years in a large school district. Thanked Dr. Gould and the School Committee for coming in…very impressed with what he sees but, not necessarily on a financial level. We cannot last as a stand-alone school. We can find places to cut this year but we have to look forward to year 2, 3 & 4 going forward. Sandwich is a poor community. Mr. McCormick offered some statistics.
Mr. Snyder noted that job of the Finance Committee is not to question any decisions they make on personnel. If you have a specific questions about their budget. Less statements more questions.

Mr. McCormick asked Dr. Gould...can you support staff and get to the 3% as requested by the Board of Selectmen?

Dr. Gould – I cut when I can. I need to meet the need of the students. I also don’t want to put people on unemployment. I am not going to hemorrhage our system without a plan. Don’t have a choice...if a student arrives with a legal document that certain needs must be met.

Mr. McCormick – we should team up with another town and be a regional school system. You have a need but how you are delivering the services has to be looked at.

Discussion regarding the percentage increase requested by the Board of Selectmen for the FY’21 budget and the budget voted by the School Committee and the budget presented for the Municipal budget, Chapter 70 finding and local contribution.

Ms. Crossman reviewed the questions to and responses from Dr. Gould i.e. the high school pool contract and in particular a new entrance to the pool to enable the public to use the pool. What are the plans going forward?

Dr. Gould – we are working on making it happen.

Dr. Gould – we do it every month.

Ms. Crossman asked about Tuition Reimbursement.

Dr. Gould gave an overview.

Mr. McCormick asked about grants for ESP’s (Education Support Personnel) and money for SPED (Special Education).

Dr. Gould noted that, yes, Title I money pay for ESP’s.

Mr. Anderson – asked about the pool and the rear entrance to open the pool to the public.

Dr. Gould – we need some kind of a changing room. We can post a schedule that would help.

Mr. Anderson – could you section off a room?

Dr. Gould – there is a cost to it.

Ms. Crossman – the men’s locker room is ok but the ladies locker room would be harder.

ITEM #6
TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Mr. Dunham gave an overview of information as noted in the Supporting Documents section at the end of these minutes noting the following – when we left the Cape Cod Municipal Health Group we would get a percentage back. The number is substantial. We spoke with the state about it. The issue we raised is so unique they gave it to legal...can this be returned to Free Cash? We are waiting to hear back. Hopefully we will get an answer from the State before the Special Town Meeting.

The Capital Improvement Planning Committee voted to support a budget of $976,112.

Overview of Draft Warrant for Special Town Meeting Scheduled for Monday, March 3, 2020

Brief discussion of Charter School reimbursement and town vehicles. Mr. Guerin noted that we should be thinking about the vehicles in both the municipal and school departments. Ms. Crossman asked to include the bus contract. Mr. Dunham noted that the Assistant Town Manager, Heather Harper, is doing a great job putting information together and have a ten year plan.

ITEM#7
OLD BUSINESS

-No FinCom meeting next week – School vacation
-Next meeting will be on February 25th and the Public Safety Departments will be in.
ITEM #8
NEW BUSINESS

Liaison Reports-
Ms. Crossman - the Capital Improvement Planning Committee (CIPC) just met and voted to support the $976,112 budget. Couple of department heads were present for the meeting with all the documentation the CIPC asked for. The Department of Public Work especially.
Mr. Anderson asked about ‘Green Communities’ and, if the Board of Selectmen have decided to go forward, could we be involved on the financial implications for the town.
Mr. Dunham noted that the biggest question is about the Stretch Code (Building Energy Code).

ITEM #9
ADJOURNMENT

8:50 p.m. *MOTION TO ADJOURN WAS MADE BY MR. GUERIN. SECONDED BY MS. CROSSMAN VOTE – UNANIMOUS.

Respectfully Submitted,

Diane M. Hanelt
Secretary

Supporting Documents:
- Noteworthy Items
  - FY’2021 Summary Salaries, Summary Expenses, Fees and Revenues, Total Budget, Chapter 70, Local Share
  - FY’21 Budget January 20, 2020
  - Budget Review
  - Governor’s Budget
  - Charter School
  - Charter School Reimbursement – Where Does Sandwich Fall?
  - Staffing
  - Budget Review
  - How the Numbers Look
  - Picture by Cam Gardner – Grade 12
  - “Best of…” Compilation FY’21 Budget (GHD 100 Route 6A Balanced Draft – 1/27/2020…Projected General Fund Revenues and Expenses – FY’21
  - FY’21 General Fund Operating Budget Totals (GHD Draft 1/28/2020) – Department, FY’20 Approp, FY’21 Salary, FY’21 Oper, FY’21 Total, % Change.
  - Capital Budget – Final Recommendation (2/3/2020)
  - Index of Potential Warrant Articles – March 23, 2020 Special Town Meeting (GHD Draft 2/6/2020)
  - proposed Upcoming Finance Committee Meetings (GHD Draft – 1/2/20)