

Town of Fairhaven

Finance Committee

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2019 APR -3 P 4:10

Minutes of the meeting for <March 5, 2019> at the Jeffery W. Osuch BPW Administration Building, 5 Arsene St., Fairhaven, MA

FAIRHAVEN,
MASS.

Members in attendance:

Padraic Elliott, Robert A. Furtado, Lisa Plante, Kathi Carter, Bernard F. Roderick,
Tracey A. Diggins, Jessica Dwelly

Town of Fairhaven:

Mark Rees- Town Administrator
Wendy Graves- Collector/Treasurer/Finance Director
Robert N. Baldwin, Ed.D- Superintendent of Schools
Tara M. Kohler- Assistant School Superintendent
Nicole V. Potter- Director of Technology
Brian Monroe- School Committee Chairman
Pam Kuechler- School Committee Vice Chairman
Stasia Powers- School Committee

Meeting was covered by government access television.

Chairman Pat called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Announced that the meeting was being recorded by government access TV. Chairman has to be notified if anyone else present is recording the meeting by video or audio.

Motion made by Lisa to accept the minutes from February 28, 2019. Seconded by Jessica.
Vote: Unanimous

- Mr. Rees begins the meeting by explaining the bids for the solid waste budget have come in, and because of an escalator clause in the recycling contract, the budget is going to need an additional \$100,000.
- Dr. Baldwin presents the School Department budget:
 - Dr. Baldwin states the budget is a level service budget.
 - Salary increases are because of contractual obligations.

- Dr. Baldwin states Out Of District Tuition and Transportation are constantly increasing in cost.
- Dr. Baldwin states Special Ed Transportation is not State reimbursed.
- Dr. Baldwin states Electricity has increased in cost.
- Dr. Baldwin states the budget does include 1 new position, an Innovation Pathways instructor for the Elementary level.
This position would help prepare students for the more high tech jobs anticipated in the future.
- Discussion of the flawed funding formula used to determine Chapter 70 money.
- Dr. Baldwin states the State underfunds the Out of District Tuition and Health Care cost by \$3,000,000. Dr. Baldwin states it is a statewide problem.
- Discussion of the Governor proposing more money.
Dr. Baldwin states it could be anywhere from \$763,000 to \$1,500,000 in additional money for Chapter 70 for the entire State.
- Dr. Baldwin states if they received additional money to satisfy their entire requested budget, the first thing they would put into place would be the Innovation Pathways instructor and then put it towards the Out Of District costs.
- Mr. Rees states we won't know if there will be additional money until after Town Meeting.
He states the House will come up with their number before Town Meeting and the final number should not be lower than that.
- Mr. Rees discusses the Special Ed Reserve Account.
- Lisa questions losing a French language teacher at the high school.
Dr. Baldwin states enrolment in that class had dropped and students weren't looking for French. He states it is available with Rosetta Stone.
- Chairman asks how things will work if they do not get the additional money.
Dr. Baldwin states they would wait until October and then make a decision about whether or not to use the SPED Reserve.
- Chairman questions the increase in Legal expenses.
Dr. Baldwin states they look at the actual from the previous year.
- Jessica questions the amount spent on Psychological services.
Dr. Baldwin explains these services used to be contracted out and now they are handled in house, reducing the cost.
- School Dept. Capital Plan
 - Dr. Baldwin explains the project is to replace the theatrical lights on the stage of the High School Performing Arts Center, at a cost of \$206,000.
 - Dr. Baldwin explains the existing lights are having issues and they have to bring lights in for the performances the school does.

- Bob asks if there is any contribution from the utility, because they are changing to energy efficient lights.

Dr. Baldwin states he will check. Mr. Rees suggests contacting the Town's Sustainability Agent.

- Lisa asks if the schools will lose anything if they don't have the budget fully funded. Dr. Baldwin states they will lose the Innovation Pathways teacher. The rest is for Out of District costs.

- Bernie asks if GNBVRTHS charges the same per pupil for the different communities it serves.

Dr. Baldwin states he doesn't know. He states each community has their own funding formula.

- Discussion of students attending GNBVRTHS.
- Bob asks if the study of regionalizing with Acushnet is dead.

Dr. Baldwin states he doesn't see the towns regionalizing, but they are having discussions about shared services.

- Ms. Potter presents the Information Technology Dept. budget:

- Ms. Potter discusses the initiatives she had for the dept.
- Fairhaven now has a social media person to increase communication with residents.
- Technology classes are being held at the Council on Aging. She would like to add evening classes.
- The last two initiatives she would like to put in place are updated software for the Assessor's dept. and online permitting software for the Building dept.
- The existing Assessor's software is 10 years old and does not allow input of field work.
- The cost of the software would be \$28,000.
- Mr. Rees states the Assessors are responsible for generating tax revenue and the present system could allow some to "fall thru the cracks".
- Chairman asks if this could be done through the Capital Plan.
- Mr. Rees states yes.
- The online permitting software would allow everything to be done digitally and the departments that are involved would all be connected.
- There would be a reoccurring \$26,000 to \$30,000 expense each year.
- Mr. Rees states the Treasurer's Dept. would also be connected because the status of taxes is checked before permits are issued.
- Chairman asks if other software packages were considered.

Mr. Rees states this is the system the Building Commissioner used at his last job. They would check with other companies before purchasing.

Discussion of scaling the implementation of the software.

- Chairman questions the 2% increase in the IT dept salary.

Mr. Rees states that is the number the School Dept. gets. The employees are paid thru the School Dept.

- Chairman questions training.

Ms. Potter states annual training is part of the employees' contracts.

- Ms. Potter states the numbers for software may seem expensive, but everything now is run by software.

7:57 Pm. School Dept. leaves meeting

- Chairman states next Thursday we will meet with the BPW and Mr. Rees will handle Town Government and Financial Articles.
- March 21st we will have the Harbormaster
- March 25th the Selectmen will take their final votes.
- We will start voting after the Harbormaster on March 21st.

- Bob asks about the difference between the Police requested Salary number and the TA recommended number.

Mr. Rees states they were initially asking for more custodial staff, and have since dropped the request. They are in agreement with the TA.

- Jessica asks about the additional firefighters.
Mr. Rees states they are looking at the Ambulance Fund.

- Discussion of the SPED Reserve Fund.

8:11 PM. Lisa motions to adjourn. Seconded by Jessica. Vote: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted by:

Robert A. Furtado
Finance Committee Secretary

accepted 3/14/2019
Robert A. Furtado