

Dover Warrant Committee

April 15, 2009

Members in attendance: Caroline White, Chair; David Stapleton, Vice Chair; Peter Smith, Secretary; James Dawley; Robyn Hunter; James Kinder; Andrew Waugh

Others in attendance: Carol Lisbon, Selectmen Liaison

Dr. White called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm

1. Review of minutes of April 1, 2009

Mr. Stapleton moved that the minutes be approved, seconded by Mr. Kinder. The motion was approved by a vote of 6-0-0 (Ms. Hunter not yet present).

2. Reconsideration of Article 11

Dr. White explained that the Moderator has asked the Committee to reconsider Article 11, which was deadlocked 4-4-0 at the April 1 meeting. Mr. Stapleton moved that the article be reconsidered, seconded by Mr. Kinder. The motion to reconsider was approved by a vote of 6-0-0 (Ms. Hunter not yet present).

Dr. White explained that she had voted against the article due to the vagueness of the presentation made at the Open Hearing on the Warrant, but having been reassured that the presentation at Town Meeting will be unambiguous, she has changed her mind. Mr. Dawley and Mr. Smith stated that the intention is clear, and quibbling over the precision of the language is unproductive.

Mr. Stapleton moved that the Committee recommend \$250,000 be raised and appropriated for Article 11, seconded by Mr. Dawley. The motion was approved by a vote of 6-1-0.

3. Reconsideration of 3.2% Salary Increase Recommendation for Non-Union Personnel

Dr. White explained that the Moderator has asked the Committee to reconsider the change to the salary increase guideline, voted 4-3-0 at the at the March 25 meeting. Mr. Stapleton moved that the article be reconsidered, seconded by Mr. Smith. The motion to reconsider was approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

Dr. White said that the Moderator wanted the Warrant Committee, the Selectmen, and the Personnel Board to be in harmony. Mr. Dawley asked why the other parties were not present in order to fully discuss the matter; if not, then the only compromise open to the Warrant Committee is capitulation. Mrs. Lisbon stated that the Personnel Board had met that afternoon and had voted to compromise provided the procedure for the future either excludes the Committee from the process, or explicitly vests responsibility with the Selectmen. She noted that all other contracts are negotiated and approved by the Selectmen and that the Warrant Committee's involvement in this area is a historical aberration. Several members objected to relinquishing the Committee's role. Ms. Hunter summarized the history of the annual general increase and the evolution of the

current methodology. Mr. Stapleton noted that the emotional impact of this matter far exceeds the dollar impact: employee morale on the one hand, taxpayer morale on the other. Several members noted that they had been approached by townspeople who were upset by the perceived generosity of any increase at a time of public and private sector austerity. Mrs. Lisbon asserted that the Warrant Committee's proper role is to provide over-all budget guidance, but that details should be left to the responsible boards. Several members countered that the Committee is responsible for guiding the preparation of the best budget possible for Town Meeting. The example of the fuel cost guideline was brought up: the Committee gave budget guidance in the fall based on the available data, but when prices swung abruptly, the guidance was changed in February; likewise, now, salary guidance. Mr. Smith stated his discomfort that the Committee was changing the budget, while the Personnel Board and Selectmen had not changed the pay scale, leaving the affected departments with conflicting mandates. Mrs. Lisbon explained that the Moderator was working with the Town's legal counsel to craft an acceptable methodology for Town Meeting that will ensure an orderly process ending in a harmonized budget and pay scale.

Mr. Waugh moved that the Committee stand by its recommendation of a 3.2% general increase for non-union personnel, seconded by Mr. Kinder. The motion was approved by a vote of 6-0-1.

4. Article 4

Ms. Hunter announced that the Assessor has verified a final revenue total of \$28,263,633. The final draft of Article 4 includes adjustments for the 3.2% general salary increase and the promotion of the Selectmen's Administrative Assistant to Assistant Town Manager. There will also be a footnote to the Fiscal 2009 totals explaining how that year's Article 4 was amended by Article 19, which provided a wage and salary adjustment.

Ms. Hunter moved that the Committee approve the latest draft of Article 4, seconded by Mr. Dawley. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

5. Finalization of Article Assignments for Town Meeting

No changes were made.

6. Blue Book Drafts

Mr. Stapleton has been feeding segments of the Blue Book to the printer as they are proof-read. Ms. Hunter will provide the final versions of Chart 1 and Article 4, which include an allocation of \$1,537,608 from Free Cash. Dr. White has verified the numbers in the Opening Remarks with the Accountant, Treasurer, and Town Manager. Mr. Stapleton will plug the final numbers into the text and charts and circulate, before the weekend if possible.

7. Reserve Fund Transfer Request

The Selectmen (account 0122) have requested that \$570.57 be transferred from the Reserve Fund to cover the increased salary of the newly-promoted Assistant Town Manager for the remainder of the fiscal year. Ms. Hunter moved that the request be approved, seconded by Mr. Dawley. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

8. Liaison Updates

Mr. Kinder (Chickering School): The final budget, including the adjusted amount for computer technology was approved.

Dr. White and Mr. Stapleton (Schools): The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's latest methodology for calculating and distributing Circuit Breaker funds was presented. The new procedure attempts to pair SIMS test scores with actual placements to minimize distortion caused by out-of-district placements. The Regional Schools will receive the Circuit Breaker reimbursement for all age-appropriate students of both towns and immediately return the allocated portions to the two towns.

Ms. Hunter (Regional Schools): Finances were reviewed. Certain areas, especially custodial services are exceeding budget. Contingencies in the coming budget are quite narrow. The demographic bubble continues to progress into the Region which is causing strains, especially in scheduling.

Mr. Dawley (Long-Range Planning): The Committee discussed a training program for new board and committee members.

*Mr. Stapleton moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Dawley;
the motion was agreed by consensus at 8:30 pm
the next meeting will be April 30 after the Moderator's meeting*

Respectfully submitted,
Peter Smith, Secretary

approved April 30, 2009