

Dover Warrant Committee

February 11, 2009

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

Others in attendance: Carol Lisbon, Selectmen Liaison; Joseph Melican, Selectman; Robert Springett, Dover School Committee; Valerie Spriggs, Superintendent of Schools; Deborah Reinemann, Dover Schools Curriculum Coordinator

Dr. White called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm

1. Review of Budgets — Dover Schools

Mr. Springett presented the budget request for a 3.6% increase over fiscal 2009 with no new programs. He showed detailed breakdowns of current expenditures and trends back to 2001. The three main cost categories – Regular Education, Special Education, and Shared Services – are not growing as rapidly as earlier in the decade, and their relative proportions are stable. He explained that the Town's entire Special Education budget, which includes students from age 3 to 22, is carried in the Dover School budget.

There were several questions from the Warrant Committee asking for comparisons of staffing levels between Chickering and its sister Pine Hill. Mr. Springett stressed that Chickering is still early in several curriculum changes and additional paraprofessional staff remains necessary. He also noted that improved MCAS scores reflect the success of these changes. He was unable to give offhand the number of support staff, but promised to provide those at a later date.

The allocation of shared staff costs, such as the Superintendent and Business Manager, were explained. State reimbursement via the Circuit Breaker is arcane and variable from year to year, even in less dire financial times.

The Warrant Committee expressed concern that a serious Town budget deficit is looming, and that the assumptions implicit in this budget should be revisited and items scaled back wherever feasible.

2. Review of Minutes of Past Meetings

Mr. Melican noted that the draft minutes of the February 4 meeting omitted him as an attendee. Mr. Stapleton moved that the minutes – amended to include Mr. Melican – be approved, seconded by Mr. Kinder. The motion was approved by a vote of 6-0-0 (Mr. Seidman not yet present).

Since the corrections to the first draft of the February 9 minutes had not yet been circulated, it was agreed that their approval be held over until the next meeting.

3. Prior Notices and Reserve Fund Transfers

Reserve Fund Transfer Request: \$2,500.00 to repair leaks in the water system in the Cemetery, account 011-0491-5200-0323-2000, dated 11/24/08. Mr. Smith moved that the request be approved, seconded by Mr. Stapleton. The motion was approved by a vote of 6-0-0 (Mr. Seidman not yet present).

4. Consideration of Budgets Already Presented

Mrs. Hunter presented the latest draft of the Article 4 spreadsheet and revenue projections. She expressed concern that the budget shortfall might exceed that of the prior fiscal year. She will meet with the Board of Assessor's at their next meeting to discuss the revenue projections.

5. Liaison Updates

Mr. Dawley (Capital Budget Committee): Lots of requests have been eliminated or downsized, including a new truck for the Highway Department and a media room for the Library.

Mrs. Hunter (Regional Schools): The next pass at the working budget will be circulated.

*Mr. Stapleton moved to adjourn, seconded by Mrs. Hunter;
the motion was agreed by consensus at 8:55 pm
the next meeting will be February 25 at 7:00 pm*

Respectfully submitted,
Peter Smith, Secretary

approved February 25, 2009