

Dover Warrant Committee
Open Hearing
Minutes of the March 18, 2013 meeting

Members in attendance: Andrew Waugh, John Cone, Robert Cocks, Rich Forte, Kathy Gill-Body, Brooks Gerner, James Stuart, Maureen Arkle

Location: Dover Town House, Great Hall

Mr. Waugh called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

Mr. Waugh extended a welcome to those in attendance and introduced the members of the Warrant Committee. He explained the budgeting guidelines to each department was for a level service budget and that any additional services above level service were to be separated from the level service budget and presented on its merits to the Warrant Committee.

Mr. Waugh explained that Articles 1 through 3 are housekeeping, and if no questions, proceed to Article 4.

Mr. Waugh introduced Mr. Stuart to explain Article 4 of the Warrant. Article 4 represents approximately 90% of the Annual Town Budget, with the Public School System comprising 58% (65% including the allocation of health insurance, pension and debt) of Article 4. Revenue comes from a variety of sources, including excises, fees, state aid, with nearly 80% from the tax levy. The proposed FY 14 budget has a \$1.6 million gap. It is the recommendation of the Warrant Committee to use Free Cash to fund the gap.

Ms. Dawn Fattore, Chickering School Committee Chair presented the School budget. Salaries represent 64% of the budget, 23% is for Out of District education for ages 3-22. Ms. Fattore outlined a proposed new program, World Language, to be introduced in the early grades at Chickering and Pine Hill and expanded each year to eventually include all elementary grades in Dover and Sherborn. Ms. Fattore referred the audience to the Dover-Sherborn website for details on the program.

Mr. Waugh opened the floor to questions about the Chickering School Budget.

Ms. Bonnie Akins expressed concern over the escalating costs of providing a high quality education. She noted that there are 114 fewer students in Chickering than in 2005, yet costs are spiraling out of control and did not think the budget is on a sustainable path.

Mr. Gerald Clark followed, echoing Ms. Akins concerns, including costs related to pension benefits and interest costs. He also noted that it appears that 1 out of 6 students require some form of intervention, requiring education beyond the traditional class room.

Ms. Nancy Simms inquired if the range of students per class has changed in recent years? Ms. Fattore replied that the range has remained consistent at 17-22 students per class. Ms. Simms voiced her support for both the traditional and special education programs.

Mr. Waugh introduced Ms. Shelly Poulsen, Chair Dover-Sherborn Regional School Committee to present the Regional School Budget. Ms. Poulsen opened by explaining that the Committee receives guidelines from Dover and Sherborn and the guidelines can be quite different. Salaries and benefits represent 76.9% of the budget, with 7.4% going towards debt service. There has been a slight shift in the population at the High School, with the percentage of the total Regional Budget decreasing for Dover. The Regional Budget for FY 14 will see an operating increase of 1.71%, debt service increase of 12.37% for a total increase of 2.55%. The budget is being balanced using \$750,000 from E&D (similar to the Town's Free Cash). There is uncertainty from the State and Federal Governments as to reimbursements. The Committee conducted a Capital Needs Assessment encompassing a 20-year plan for the Region.

Mr. Waugh opened the floor for questions.

Ms. Simms inquired as to the balance remaining in the E&D account after using \$750,000. The exact number was not readily available, however, Ms. Spriggs (Superintendent of Schools) informed the audience that it remained at 3.49% of budget, within the guidelines to maintain the stability of the fund and keep a high rating for future borrowing.

Mr. Max Morton inquired if the teacher turnover rate is changing and is there a shift in the age of teachers at the Region with more senior teachers retiring. Ms. Spriggs stated that the turnover rate is steady and some senior staff are nearing retirement. She is not expecting a mass exodus. Teachers are asked to inform the Superintendent February 1 if they plan to retire of that year.

Mr. Waugh introduced Mr. Mike Aceti, Chair of the Capital Budget Committee to present Article 5, Capital Budget. Mr. Aceti explained the process of looking at capital expenses on a 5-year time horizon. Initial discussion begins in August. For this year's budget, there are 22 requests totaling \$646,000. This is consistent with prior years. He also noted that the capital requests are gross amounts, and do not reflect any value received for trade-in.

Mr. Waugh opened the floor to questions.

Ms. Akins asked about the Animal Control Vehicle. It was her understanding that we share the Animal Control Officer with another town and was the other town sharing in the cost of the vehicle. A similar question was raised by Mr. Clark regarding the lettering on the truck. Will it in fact be a Dover vehicle? Mr. David Ramsey, Town Administrator addressed the audience stating that the Animal Control Officer is a shared person with the town of Medfield and that the vehicle would be a Dover Animal Control Vehicle, used for Dover business only.

Mr. Scott Seidman asked why the Library carpet was part of the Selectman's capital request. The Library is owned by the Town and comes under the Selectman budget.

Ms. Simms asked about the mileage of the two police vehicles being replaced. Mr. Aceti replied that when traded in they will have between 80,000 – 100,000 miles each. It is not so much the miles as the hours. The police vehicles are running most of the day.

Mr. Waugh explained that Articles 6 through 8 are housekeeping, and if no questions, proceed to Article 9.

Article 9 is to provide for the use of revolving funds for several Town boards and departments.

Mr. Waugh told the audience the Committee received written notice from the Council on Aging that Article 10 will be withdrawn at Town Meeting.

Article 11 is to amend section 185-52 Special Permits of the Zoning Bylaws to allow for the addition of an associate member to help with maintaining a quorum for votes during the permitting process.

Mr. Waugh introduced Ms. Barbara Palmer to present Article 12, Citizen's Petition to require the Town to vote at Town Meeting for any projects exceeding \$50,000 on Town-owned property for which half or less of the cost is to come from Town appropriations. Ms. Palmer stated that the residents of the Town should have the right to decline a gift they do not want. Ms. Palmer voiced concern that there is potential cost to the Town relating to maintenance and future repair costs. She believes that private funding of projects on Town owned land should be decided by Town vote. Ms. Palmer stated that she planned to introduce an amendment to the Article to increase the trigger point, estimated to be around \$150,000 and apply to park land. Mr. Dawley, chair Dover Selectman, voiced his concern that it would put an undue burden on the Town to have to go to Town meeting for votes on projects that include substantial private funding. Mr. Dawley stated that in consultation with Town Council that the Article is too far reaching and undermines the authority of elected officials. Mr. Dawley stated that the Selectmen are opposed to the Article.

Mr. Waugh opened the floor to questions.

Mr. Josh Klenbanoff, not a Dover resident, indicated that he represented several Dover residents that were willing to litigate on the issue and the resulting costs associated with the Caryl Fields Project.

Ms. Nancy Simms, member of Park & Recreation, addressed the audience stating that Park & Recreation plan to accrue funds to pay for maintenance and replacement of the carpet at the planned Caryl Park Project. Ms. Simms also added that there will be a non-binding referendum on the May 20th ballot asking the voters if they support the addition of turf fields at the Caryl Park. Ms. Simms stated that the Park & Recreation Committee will abide by the vote on the referendum on the proposed project.

Ms. Justine Kent-Uritam ([Help- I could not find this name in the Dover Directory](#)) inquired as to the legality of Town officials entering into agreements similar to the Caryl Park Project, recalling a NYNEX cell tower that was placed on Town-owned land in 1984 involving a long-term lease that should have gone before Town Meeting. She requested that the Warrant Committee investigate if there is any commercial interest or quid-pro-quo with the proposed turf fields.

Mr. Waugh asked Ms. Poulsen to present Article 13, HVAC for the Middle School.

Ms. Paulsen presented some data showing the temperatures of class rooms in the Middle School during the year. The data presented shows that between 15-20% of the school year the temperature in the class room is above 78°F. The Regional School Committee has a memorandum of understanding with the teachers, as part of the union contract, to address the excessive heat problem in the Middle School.

Ms. Paulsen stated that Article 14 will be withdrawn at Town Meeting as it was an alternate funding mechanism for the proposed HVAC project in Article 13.

Mr. Waugh opened the floor to questions. Being none, Mr. Waugh asked Ms. Paulsen to present Article 15.

Ms. Paulsen introduced Article 15. The Article is a capital request to begin to address repairs and deferred maintenance to the physical plant at the Region. This is part of a 20-year capital needs assessment totaling \$20 million for 250 separate projects, some of which are being funded by Boosters. The request is for \$122,000.

Ms. Paulsen stated that Article 16 will be withdrawn at Town Meeting as it was an alternate funding mechanism for the proposed capital improvement project in Article 15.

Mr. Waugh opened the floor to questions. Being none, Mr. Waugh asked Mr. Greg Hills to present Article 17 to fund a feasibility study of converting the Bay Colony railroad line into a recreational path.

Mr. Hills stated that the Rail Trail Committee has accomplished much since last Town Meeting. It now needs assistance with technical issues to determine if the project is feasible for the Town. The Committee has used \$1,000 of the \$5,000 voted at last Town meeting to pay for a website and mailing. The request for \$50,000 is to specifically pay for professional services to do research on Right-of-Way Review, MBTA lease terms, Engineering Analysis, Construction Contracting and Environmental Review. If this request is approved, the Committee will work toward completion of the Feasibility Study in time for the May 2014 Town Meeting. Mr. Hills informed the audience of the formation of Friends of the Dover Rail Trail, which will raise funds to cover the costs of maintenance and repairs to the Trail.

Mr. Waugh opened the floor to questions.

Ms. Martha Bohlin raised questions around demand from Town residents for the Trail and if this would potentially serve more out of Town residents than Town residents. She presented some figures suggesting that the meetings held by the Rail Trail Committee were poorly attended, averaging six people per meeting. She asked if it would impact the character of the Town. How would it be maintained? Who would patrol and enforce the rules? Can the committee do a better job of communicating with the Town and its merchants?

The Committee identified 155 public parking spaces in Town Center to allow access to the Trail.

Ms. Kate Cannie addressed the audience stating that the Committee is using the numbers from the Town survey last year. Ms. Cannine stated that 75% of the respondents to the survey supported the Rail Trail.

Mr. Phil Trotter asked if the Committee would prioritize the spending on the study. In other words, if the committee came across a non-starter, would they abandon the balance of the study. Mr. Hills replied that if during the feasibility study, the Committee came across a non-starter for the recreational path, they would not expend additional funds. Mr. Hills noted that the feasibility study does not include the railroad trestle between Dover and Needham.

Mr. Kevin Ban addressed the audience as chair of the Friends of the Rail Trail, stating that there are 160 members that stand ready to support the effort if deemed feasible.

Mr. Hills concluded by reminding the audience that the request is for funding the study to see if the Rail Trail makes sense for Dover. It is NOT a request to fund the construction of the path.

Mr. Waugh asked Ms. Amy DiSanto to present article 18, which is to amend the Zoning bylaw and put a moratorium prohibiting medical marijuana treatment centers in Dover until such time that State regulations are developed governing the centers.

Ms. DiSanto provided background on SPAN-DS. She supports the moratorium while the rules and regulations of the law are being finalized by the State.

Mr. Waugh opened the floor to questions. Being none, Mr. Waugh explained that Articles 19 through 22 were standard articles and that Article 23 will most likely be withdrawn.

Mr. Waugh opened the floor to questions. Being none, Mr. Waugh thanked those in attendance for their participation and looked forward to seeing everyone at Town Meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 PM.

The Next meeting of the Warrant Committee is scheduled for March 20.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Forte