

Minutes of the Dover Warrant Committee 2015 Open Hearing

Minutes of the March 16, 2015 meeting

Location: Dover Town House, Great Hall

WC Members In Attendance: James Stuart – Chair, Douglass Lawrence, Brooks Gerner, Kathy Gill-Body, Kate Cannie, Geoffrey Merrill, Rodney Petersen (Richard Forté – not present)

Mr. Stuart called the Warrant Open Hearing meeting to order at 7.30pm.

Mr. Stuart extended a welcome to those in attendance and introduced the members of the Warrant Committee. He explained the budgeting process and the guidelines to each department was for level-service budget and that any services above level service were to be highlighted and presented as separate items to the Warrant Committee. Mr. Stuart explained that the Warrant Committee endorsed the Personnel Committee's recommendation for a 2.2% increase for non-contract employees.

Mr. Stuart explained the protocol for the Open Hearing and welcomed any questions or clarifications from the audience to be made after each speaker had finished. He explained that the amounts in the budgets to be presented were preliminary and were subject to change.

Mr. Stuart proceeded to summarize all of the articles in order, explaining that some were routine/annual housekeeping items, some were routine but involved a financial allocation or aspect, some were non-recurring that had a financial aspect and some were non-recurring with no financial aspect.

Mr. Stuart then presented the summary of the proposed FY2016 Operating Budget. He explained that expenditures as proposed are to be \$36,517,504 (as of 03/16/15) vs. \$34,763,299 in FY15, an increase of 5.0% or \$1,754,205. Total Revenues (excluding the use of Free Cash) were projected to be \$34,307,745 vs. \$33,545,777, an increase of 2.3% or \$761,968. The use of Free Cash is projected to be \$2,209,759 vs. \$1,542,351 for FY15, an increase of 43.3% or \$667,408.

Mr. Stuart explained the large changes in the budget: Regional Schools Operating Assessment – up \$501 thousand; Dover Schools Operating – up \$207 thousand; Group Health Insurance – up \$218 thousand; Norfolk County Retirement – up \$95 thousand. Decreases were Dover Regional Schools Debt Assessment – down by \$104 thousand. Mr. Stuart noted that FY16 Capital Items and Special Articles were up vs. FY15 by \$429 thousand.

Mr. Stuart presented and described slides describing the relative sizes of the budget items showing that the Operating budget is the bulk of expenditures, and that Schools are the bulk of Article 4 spending, followed by Protective Services and Debt Service. Mr. Stuart explained that estimated revenues for FY16 are projected to be \$36.5 million up about 4%. 79% is the tax levy and 5.5% is local receipts followed by other items. He also presented a history of the components and the summary of the Revenues and expenditures and the history of the use of free cash. At an estimated 6.1% use of Free Cash to close the gap, Mr. Stuart explained this amount is well within the guideline and historical range.

Mr. Stuart then introduced Mrs. Dawn Fattore, Chair of the Dover School Committee, who presented the FY16 Dover Schools Budget.

Mrs. Fattore explained that the DSC budget was approached with a desire to provide level services in line with current enrollment as well as within the guidelines of the DWC guidance letter. She mentioned that healthcare costs for school employees are not reflected in the Schools budget (they are paid directly by the Town) and they total approximately \$1 million dollars. She explained that Chapter 70 State aid revenues of \$700,000 are anticipated and Circuit Breaker reimbursement of approximately \$900,000 will offset FY16 Out-of-District costs.

The FY16 DSC budget, Mrs. Fattore explained, totals to \$9,717,545, up 2.18% and is composed of \$6,550,001 – in-district, and \$3,167,544 – out-of-district. Those components are down 2.05% and up 12.20% from FY15, respectively.

Mrs. Fattore spoke about the declining enrollment trends over time and how those relate to the number of classrooms and teachers – comparing FY09 to FY16.

Mrs. Fattore then explained the changes in the in-district education budget with the reduction in classes and the overall salary decreases from reductions and increases overall. She explained that there will be a new pre-K education program in FY16 that will educate 15 students and allow for ½ the class to be special education identified. Mrs. Fattore stated that the costs are estimated to be \$189,000 with offsetting revenues, conservatively estimated to be \$20,000. She explained that the cost of placing the special education students in lieu of this new classroom was estimated to be approximately \$240,000 (avoided costs).

Mrs. Fattore then explained the details of the circuit breaker reimbursement as related to out-of-district education costs. She concluded by describing the initiatives to streamline the Special Education administration.

Mr. Stuart thanked Mrs. Fattore and introduced Mrs. Dana White, Chair of the Regional School Committee (RSC).

Mrs. White explained that RSC gets guidance from both Dover Warrant (level-service) and Sherborn Advisory (increase of 1.5% and 12% from any benefit

increase). They are always looking to act “regionally”. She explained RSC is operating in an enrollment bubble and they don’t expect to see the student population decline for 5 or 6 years. She explained that they have a \$23 million budget for FY16 and 85% is related to salaries and benefits (their budget includes benefits). For FY16, she explained that salaries are up 5.7% (4.4% in a direct comparison taking out a contract placeholder from the previous year) and benefits, which are hard to control, are up by 11%.

Mrs. White stated that overall the total Regional budget is going up by 4.0% for FY16. She then explained and detailed the variance items for in-district, non-special education totaled to \$128 thousand. She explained that the other big chunk of the increase is from special education. She explained that their goal is to try to keep the students in-district or bring them back in. A lot of the programs revolve around reading, she explained.

New in-district Sped-related expenditures for the Regional FY16 budget are to be \$175 thousand, or 16% of the variance, Mrs. White said. She stated that there was a new transportation bid that came in lower than expected. She explained that Chapter 70 & 71 budget (revenues), an estimated increase for the former of \$190 thousand and a decrease for the latter for FY16 – based on FY15, which was decreased from the FY14 amounts. She explained they expect to tap \$500 thousand from the Excess and Deficiency Account, same as FY15. Mrs. White stated that activity fees, athletic and miscellaneous) are expected to be up by \$15,000 or 4%.

Mr. Stuart then introduced Mr. Bob Springett, Chair of the Capital Budget Committee. Mr. Springett thanked the town employees, committee chairs and members for their help in putting together the FY16 capital budget as well as the other members of the CBC.

Mr. Springett presented a slide showing the FY16 Article 5 capital budget and the current estimates for the “out-years” FY17-FY20. He explained that the FY16 Article 5 Capital budget for FY16 is \$770,121 and \$550,000 for the facilities upgrade at Caryl Community Center (in the special articles). The total is \$1,321,121, up significantly from last year. For out years there is \$450 thousand in FY18 and \$1.3 million in FY20 earmarked for Caryl Community Center in future years – in addition to \$600 thousand on FY19 for re-roofing the Town House, he explained.

Mr. Springett then described the specific Capital Budget requests: Fire and Ambulance (\$19,949); Highway - Sidewalk Plow (\$171,950), - one ton truck (\$56,640), -slide-in sander (\$22,975); Park and Recreation Utility Vehicle (\$21,000); Police Department – Patrol vehicles (\$83,000), - Dress Uniforms (\$19,000), - Message Speed Board (\$17,700); Dover School Committee – Security Enhancement (\$34,995), Floor Scrubber (\$12,477), Gym Curtain Divider (\$16,360), School Technology – 25 Lenovo Chromebooks (\$11,475), 8 HP Pro laptops (\$7,600); Board of Selectmen – Library Replacement of Upper level Carpeting (\$73,000), Library

repainting of interior (\$52,000), Protective Agencies Building repair and repainting of apparatus floor (\$150,000).

Mr. Stuart then introduced Mr. Dawley who discussed Article 10 – the proposed change of the Town bylaws to alter the number of members on the Council on Aging to a seven-member committee in order to make the council more efficient.

Mr. Dawley then addressed Article 11- the Caryl Community Center Facilities Upgrade Plan. It is a request for \$550,000 to totally renovate the bathrooms in the Caryl Community Center, he explained. He stated that it is part of a plan by the Selectmen to bring the CCC up to the standards of the Town as with all the other Town buildings.

Mr. Dawley then reviewed the history of the CCC over the past 15 years – starting with the BOS assuming responsibility for the care of the former Caryl School in 2002, with the initial goal of making repairs only when necessary, through studies and design estimates in 2003-2006, approved drainage, masonry repairs, and oil tank replacement in 2007 through 2011. Mr. Dawley stated there was strong town support for maintaining the building. He then detailed the major capital expenditures since 2002 including the roof, masonry, hip rafters, and oil tanks totaling to \$740,949.

Mr. Dawley described the current usage housing: town departments 42% of the building and tenants, which cater to the town residents, use approximately 34%: Erin's School of Dance, Parent Talk, and the CDC. There are community short-term rentals (Library, Gym) that use other parts of the building. Mr. Dawley stated that revenues from the three tenants total to more than \$100,000. For the most part, he explained, the tenants pay for the costs of the building.

Mr. Dawley then summarized by explaining the Board of Selectmen's vision for the Caryl Community Center that it is a valuable town asset and is committed to upgrading the building in accordance with standards applied to other town-owned properties. He stated that the facilities upgrade plan addresses long-neglected systems and repairs needed to make the CCC more functional, efficient and acceptable to users. He explained that the plan addresses three major areas: renovation of the four toilet rooms, replacement of the original heating boilers and replacement of HVAC controls and supply system – not original to building. The conditions of the bathrooms are not acceptable and lack handicap accessibility compliance and have non-functioning exhaust systems. He described the detail of the estimated costs totaling to \$550,000. He showed pictures of the bathrooms.

Mr. Dawley then summarized the reasons for preserving and maintaining the CCC and moving forward with the facilities upgrade plan.

Mr. Stuart thanked Mr. Dawley and introduced Mrs. White to present the Capital budget for the Region for FY16.

Mrs. White stated the Region is requesting \$358 thousand of which Dover's share is \$194,931 or 54.45%. She said they had come up with a long-term plan so they could manage year-to-year over time. They look at what they can do to smooth expenditures year-to-year. She then described the items: painting walls (\$75,980), flooring (\$71,771), exterior LED upgrade (\$45,000), second water well (\$40,000), gym floors (\$38,436), gym dividers (\$27,239), surface repair 9(\$20,419), security upgrade (\$15,614), emergency generator recommissioning (\$12,611), site lighting (\$10,930). She then noted that there is an intermunicipal agreement in place allowing Dover and Sherborn to pay for the capital items as they each desired (cash or borrowing).

Mr. Stuart thanked Mrs. White and introduced Selectman Hunter to talk about the Minuteman Vocational School Articles – 15, 16, and 17.

Mrs. Hunter explained that every school system in Massachusetts is required to provide a vocation school choice for their students. She stated that Dover utilizes Minuteman Regional Technical High School. We have historically sent between 1-3 students per year and Dover is one of 16 towns that are part of the region, she explained. She said that the Minuteman School is in dire need of repair to the facility and there is a need to amend the Minuteman Regional Agreement. Article 15 is the amendment of the regional agreement. As it stands now, 10 towns have approved the amended agreement, 5 towns are undecided and 1 has voted against it. She then described the main differences (votes, capital assessment, withdrawal) between the proposed amended agreement and the existing Minuteman Regional Agreement. She directed people to the Dover website for details and further explanation about the agreements. She explained the options Minuteman is considering: renovation or new buildings and their estimated costs to Dover. She detailed the considerations for a possible Dover withdrawal from the Region. Mrs. Hunter explained that at this time the BOS do not have a recommendation to the town, and that the BOS would recommend withdrawing from Minuteman in Article 16 should it vote for the new agreement. She explained Article 17 would be an intergovernmental agreement to send children to Minuteman if Dover has withdrawn from the Minuteman District. Mrs. Hunter then concluded and asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Repetti, 14 Old Meadow Road, asked a question about the number of towns we would need to agree to our withdrawal. Mrs. Hunter explained that a majority of the towns would be needed for a withdrawal under the proposed new regional agreement.

Mr. Ford Spalding, 5 Hutton Road, explained that he is on the Minuteman School Committee and that it is a vote of a majority of the towns not the vote of the school committee needed to exit the System. Mr. Spalding thanked Mrs. Hunter for the work and explanation. He stated that there would be a presentation the next night to describe the building issue.

Mr. Spalding then explained Article 18 the extension of benefits to widows and children of deceased firefighters to be paid at their expense – at no cost to the town for firefighters killed in the line of duty as permitted by a new MA statute.

Mr. Stuart thanked Mr. Spalding. Mr. Stuart closed by thanking the Town Administrator and Town employees for helping to prepare the budgets, and moved to adjourn the meeting – seconded Mrs. Gill-Body, approved 8-0-0 (Mr. Richard Forté absent).

Respectfully Submitted,

James Stuart