

RTM Finance & Budget Committee - Regular Scheduled Meeting Minutes
3/16/2015

Present: J. Palen, R. Cardone, T. Duffy, J. Davis, B. Hayes, M. Banks, S. Anderson, K. Hoffman, M. Thorne, D. Ritchie, A. Millar

Absent: G. DuPont, J. Boulton

Guests: J. Stevenson (First Selectman), K. Buch (Finance Director)

With 8 of 13 members present consisting of quorum, J. Palen called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. in Town Hall Room 119. M. Thorne, D. Ritchie and A. Millar joined shortly after meeting was called to order. The agenda was unanimously approved.

J. Palen began meeting by distributing summaries provided for capital items by departments and BOS. Introduced J. Stevenson and K. Buch to discuss BOS budget items. Began with questions on revenues for Parks & Rec. J. Stevenson confirmed that commission voted on increasing certain fees, but details were not available right now. She also noted revenues were under purview of Board of Finance.

S. Anderson requested more details on revenue stream. J. Davis inquired whether there was any comparison of costs versus revenues with line items in Parks & Rec budget. K. Buch stated that she did not know methodology that commission uses, though knows that they have studied diminishing returns when fees have been increased.

R. Cardone inquired whether beach sand had been removed for capital request. K. Buch clarified that portion remains in request. J. Stevenson noted that she is looking for ways to understand long-term need for beach sand and arrive at objective measure that can be applied year after year and perhaps add to operating budget rather than capital request. S. Anderson clarified that present proposal would require current request to be funded in proposed budget year and reflected in mill rate and taxes.

J. Davis inquired as to status of technology initiative to review town and BOE needs and evaluate most efficient approach and strategic plan. J. Stevenson said not aware that anyone in town was involved in the discussion. Discussed current structure was that BOE ran technology and town paid for services. J. Stevenson confirmed her view that there needs to be a larger technology initiative, but that given agenda of items, it was not a focus this year.

J. Palen inquired about increase in debt service and whether majority was related to Short Lane notes. K. Buch stated that town debt service has gone up for various reasons and initiatives. K. Buch offered to share debt service schedule detail with committee. Further discussion across committee on debt service schedule and Short Lane contribution.

T. Duffy inquired why spending was allocated half out of capital fund and half out of sewer fund for Vac Truck. K Buch said both would utilize equipment, so was split accordingly.

R. Cardone inquired why BOE controlled technology budget and whether that control should remain. J. Severson provided historical context of why technology was provided for by BOE. M. Banks noted that town should be involved in discussion as technology needs of town are probably quite different than BOE. J. Stevenson noted that she thought town had good grasp of individual department needs, but her concern was more about being prepared for issues such as long-term capacity and hardware needs.

M. Banks inquired about news story that state budget was reducing probate court funding. K. Buch commented on budget items related to probate court.

J. Palen inquired whether there were any other questions on BOS budget for guests. With no additional questions, J. Stevenson and K. Buch left meeting at 8:14 PM.

M. Thorne noted that overall cost of capital items was quite high. D. Ritchie reiterated desire for more detailed replacement schedule. S. Anderson noted fleet management plan may help to alleviate this. Discussion ensued across committee, including on whether to incur various costs over time versus larger one-time capital expenditures.

J. Palen asked for suggestions to make to Board of Finance on budget. J. Palen offered request to increase revenue through increased fees as first recommendation item. S. Anderson voiced belief that in the case of dump, fees should be set to break even for direct costs. J. Palen noted sewer fees are set to break even. A. Millar noted that if we push for a break-even fee schedule approach, it should be applied the same across all fee services and should not just single out certain services such as the dump.

T. Duffy noted that exec summaries provided tonight were helpful and we should communicate again that such summaries should be mandated for capital expenditures above \$25-30k.

S. Anderson stated that we still have no data on insurance and healthcare data. J. Palen asked to work on compiling list on items.

J. Palen asked whether there was a better way to present budget was to include operating, capital, library and town and sewer debt service to review changes year-over-year. Committee discussion on appropriate way to set out budget to gauge increases.

R. Cardone expressed concern that with work that boards and committee have done with the budgets and reasonable increases in both BOS and BOE, tax rate was still set to increase at rate that is discouraging. Concerned with tax rate going up with relatively controlled budgets. J. Palen noted that some capital items will be removed and some additional money will be taken out of reserve account which will reduce tax rate. Increase can likely come under 3% with these and a few additional cuts.

J. Palen asked whether committee was in favor of determining final list of questions on March 30th, meeting at 7:30 PM to deliver to Board of Finance on March 31st. T. Duffy suggested we also take a sense of the meeting vote on budgets at that time.

J. Palen turned discussion to BOE budget. D. Ritchie mentioned concern over capital items, especially with uncertainty of facility study. S. Anderson and J. Davis echoed concern with facilities study. J. Davis noted other uncertainty given course changes at the high school, special ed changes over last couple of years, new superintendent and changes to ELP.

T. Duffy mentioned special ed reimbursement and noted it was brought up at public Board of Finance hearing. Noted potential that these estimates might change. General discussion ensued on BOE budget

J. Palen suggested same agenda for meeting on March 30th. No additions or opposition from the committee. Mentioned that BOE member and K. Kilduff would be invited to address additional budget questions.

J. Palen turned to approval of committee minutes of March 9th meeting. S. Anderson moved to approve minutes. M. Thorne seconded approval. Minutes approved by 10 of 11 members (A. Millar abstaining as not at last meeting).

M Thorne moved to adjourn meeting. R Cardone seconded. Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.