

Budget Collaboration/Summit 6
March 1, 2006

A joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen, School Committee and Finance Committees was held on Wednesday, March 1, 2006, at 7:00 p.m. in Lexington High School Commons II. Chairman Krieger, Mr. Pagett, Mr. Cohen and Mr. Manz; Mr. Valente, Town Manager; and Ms. Pease, Executive Clerk were present.

The Chairs of the School Committee, Appropriation Committee and Capital Expenditures Committee called their members to order.

FY2007 Capital – Updated Recommendations from Capital Expenditures Committee

Mr. Lamb, Capital Expenditures Committee (CEC), reviewed the capital recommendations of the CEC. The Committee voted 5-0 against supporting Article 15 – Amend General By-Laws to Create Energy Committee.

Mr. Lamb emphasized his request regarding setting aside approximately \$940,000 in a Stabilization Fund for Cash Capital items.

The Appropriations Committee has not taken positions on the capital items yet.

Questions were raised regarding Article 28(c)b – Building Envelope – ADA Upgrade, TOB Ramp and Door. Correct amount is \$150,000 and the item is presently on the municipal at-risk list. CEC recommended \$0 for FY2007. It should be reviewed again next year and Cary Hall should be priority.

Discussed Article 28(a) – Sidewalks; Selectmen will consider Mr. Levine's suggestion of putting it on the at-risk list and having an override item as an annual amount less than \$300,000, maybe \$50,000 as a way to reduce the stress on capital items. Mr. Lamb will discuss with the CEC but prefers not to have it set aside.

Review of At-Risk Proposals (Municipal and School)

Municipal

Mr. Valente reviewed the Municipal At-Risk List by department.

Mr. Levine, after reading the detailed information on each item, was concerned that the list felt like the 2003 override that failed. The list includes items that affect the day-to-day operations. He asked if there were any alternatives and suggested putting trash disposal at-risk instead of public safety. He also suggested charging more for certain items to cover the cost of the service.

The Selectmen do not want to start a trash war again. The function of an override is to let the citizens decide the level of service they want. We have to remember that 70% of the

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municipal budget is for Police, Fire and DPW, so it is inevitable that some public safety items will be at-risk.

Discussed implementing a solid waste/recycling enforcement program. This program is very common in other communities and can help to reduce solid waste. The sense was that it should definitely be implemented.

Discussed the importance of restoring the position of Economic Development Officer and that it would generate revenue.

The Library Trustees voted to reduce the Library budget by \$120,000 by closing the East Lexington Library (saving \$87,500) and closing Cary Library on Sunday (saving \$41,600). This reduction will not affect the Library's certification.

Questions were asked about the impact of the reduction in overtime funding on the Fire ambulance and ladder. This would affect approximately 30 (days) times a year of second ambulance and 15 (days) times a year of the ladder truck. The Board is concerned about the impact, but they recognize the Town receives great support from neighboring communities.

The Police reductions include elimination of the Police Cadet Program. Selectmen are concerned about the long-term consequences.

Mr. Griffiths, School Committee, was very concerned about the possible elimination of the Social Services nutrition program. Mr. Valente was hopeful there would be a way to fund the program through Friends of the Council on Aging with fundraising.

There was concern about the elimination of the mailing of State Election notices. Town Counsel is reviewing the law and it may be necessary to change the Town By-laws.

Mr. Levine, Appropriations Committee, recommends taking the Fire and Police at-risk items off the list by restoring the water and sewer pilot reduction voted by the Board. The Selectmen felt this would not be appropriate.

Discussed whether further money from reserves should be used to fund school and municipal at-risk items. Selectmen feel it is important not to further diminish our reserves but rather to grow the reserves for the future.

The Selectmen would like the solid waste/recycling enforcement program implemented but do not want to remove from the override.

Schools

The School Committee voted 4-1 (Guttag opposed) to support the enhanced budget of \$66,703,858.

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Mrs. Guttag, School Committee, gave a minority report. She supports the Basic Budget of \$64,078,046 with the following additions: \$650,000 for a maintenance account and \$250,000 for Special Education. She urges the Town Manager and School Superintendent to work together to restructure the school and municipal IT departments into one that could provide savings and would support adding \$75,000 from the School budget. Total override she supports is \$4 million.

Mr. Diaz, School Committee, gave his reasons for supporting the enhanced budget: it builds capital for Special Education; restores services and programs; builds middle management; and includes hiring teachers in math and science for the middle schools to improve performance of students.

Dr. Ash reviewed the changes to the at-risk list.

Minuteman Assessment

Mr. Valente budgeted \$900,000 for Minuteman, but the assessment came in at \$1,082,250. We may receive additional state aid money that would cover the additional assessment. Mr. Valente recommends leaving the revenue projection as is and adjusting as necessary when we receive state aid numbers in mid-April. Mr. Kanter, Appropriation Committee, feels the revenue adjustment should be made now.

Final Agreement on FY2007 Operating Budget

The Selectmen need to vote on the total budget. Since Mr. Kelley was not at the meeting the Selectmen decided to meet on Thursday, March 2, 2006, in Cary Hall to take the vote. Total proposed budget, including at-risk items totaling \$6,584,321, is \$141.4 million.

The School Committee plans to vote the School budget on March 15.

Bill to Eliminate Local Access

Mrs. Krieger discussed with the Board and they agreed that a letter should be sent to U.S. Representative Markey stating Lexington's concerns regarding the possible elimination of local access fees that is being pushed by Verizon.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was voted to adjourn at 9:15 p.m.

A true record; Attest:

Lynne A. Pease
Executive Clerk