

TOWN OF FOXBOROUGH

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

FEBRUARY 1ST, 2017

Committee Members Present: Sue Dring, Thom Freeman, Sean McCarthy, Stephanie McGowan, Seth Ferguson, Heidi Krockta, Bernard Dumont, Brent Ruter, Jessica Allen, Rob Canfield, Javed Hussein.

Members Absent: Marcia Galvin, Osie Poku.

Others Present: Randy Scollins, Bill Keegan, Lisa Sinkus, Debra Spinelli, Christina Belanger, Bill Yukna, Marilyn Weiss, Beverly Lord, Chris Connolly

The meeting was brought to order at 7:05 by Susan Dring. Additionally the School Committee motioned to open session by Christina Belanger, seconded by Beverly Lord. Vote: 5/0/0.

7:06 PM Prior to the School Committee presenting on the School Department budget, Seth inquired about conflict of interest if Advisory Committee members had students in the Foxborough School system. Sue responded that it did not, however Stephanie recused herself due to a conflict of interest involving a family member that worked for the system. Superintendent Spinelli stated that only if members were to financially or personally gain from their actions on the committee would they need to recuse themselves.

7:09 PM The School Committee presented on the School Department budget. Superintendent Spinelli, Bill Yukna, and members of the School Committee (SCOM) opened the presentation by providing the Advisory Committee (ADCOM) with slides from a power point presentation highlighting the entirety of the proposed budget of \$34,089,604. The proposed budget is increased by 3.40% or \$1,120,294.

The areas of growth and increase are within Special Education, Information Technology, and Transportation regarding out of district placements and METCO. Additionally outside offsets to the budget in the form of "Circuit Breakers", essentially reimbursed funds from the state, grants and revolving accounts have suffered some reductions in the past year. Significant drivers for incremental increases are found within increased special needs placement/care and transportation, out of district placements, bargaining unit negotiations, the kindergarten tuition phase out, and recurring costs for software, networking licensing, and bandwidth requirements.

Bill Yukna explained that the SCOM's strategy for building a budget every year is to focus on maintaining district goals, such as keeping class sizes low, and presenting the community with a

fully transparent budget. Each year the SCOM throws out the previous year's budget to build a whole new one and builds in processes to prepare to cover retirements and subsequent staffing.

Heidi stated that, as a reminder to the ADCOM, employee health insurance and other benefits was not reflected in the budget. Additionally she later reminded the committee that 85% of the budget was made up of salaries.

Superintendent Spinelli reported to the ADCOM that the school system is judicious in its staffing by redeploying staff where they are most needed and repurposing positions in areas where enrollment is down or eliminating those positions when there is a retirement. While many areas of the budget can be subject to change the area regarding special needs is nonnegotiable as there are state and federal laws regarding their education. By law the town must provide education for those with special needs and if the town has inadequate services to meet those needs the town must allow for those individuals to attend institutions that can. Currently there are twenty seven out of district placements with a possible increase to thirty. It is extremely hard to anticipate these needs as families may move in during the summer.

The Superintendent followed up by sharing with the ADCOM how the school system negotiates with the numerous bargaining units employed by the town. In total there are nine bargaining units within the school system, of those nine Bill and Debra negotiate with seven of them on their own. This is for two reasons; the first is to provide an open and honest dialogue with the employees of the community to engender mutual respect and trust, the second is to save the community money by not paying for exorbitant legal fees and only using lawyers in a consultative capacity instead of an operational capacity.

Sean inquired if the town's best interests were served by that method of negotiation. Superintendent Spinelli responded that the mutual respect and trust is an organizational mainstay that benefits the community, and in the end all decisions must be ratified by the SCOM before they are finalized.

Sean then inquired if the Town of Foxborough was comparable to other school systems? Bill stated that there are lots of oddities in every budget across school systems. Randy also stated that the Department Of Education's reporting was problematic and generally unhelpful.

Bernard asked about where the town was heading in three to five years with enrollment decreasing across the system and the inevitability costs increasing. The Superintendent explained that the whole state is declining in school age children, but "move ins" from other communities can impact the needs of the school system.

9:00 PM Minute duties transferred to Thom Freeman as Matthew Mackenzie was excused from duty for personal reasons.

Wednesday, February 1st 2017

9:00

*Bernard D made the point that Private/Public benefits differ, that there are 'hidden values'.

Bill Yukna asked the board to look at 3-5 year projections for revenues. 2.5% Taxation limit budget increases vs. 3.4% trending revenues. The education budget responds to public demand.

*Seth F asserted revenue growth @ 4.5% but cautioned about sentiment driven priorities.

*Thom F inquired if Foxborough has become a 'destination' for Special Education students (Out of Town services) due to the town's capacity to fund these programs. Is there an advocacy network that may be directing students to Foxborough?

Beverly Lord emphatically replied 'Yes!'.

Bill Yukna countered that while the town has been able to budget for these needs, the availability of affordability in moving to Foxborough acts as an economic buffer.

*Thom F asked if there has been a measurable Improvement in efficiencies since the improvements at the high school. Also, how inefficient is the Burrell School becoming?

Bill Yukna replied that the town is definitely spending less, but even more so, the comfort factor for staff and students through consistent temperature control. He continued to say that the high school is seeing a reduction of 50% in gas usage. The school will see an 80% reduction in power usage due to LED lights.

As for the Burrell, there is a constant mending operation to keep it running. The MSBA process for funding to repair the building will hold a hearing for Foxborough on Monday, February 6th; an accelerated opportunity, due to Bill Yukna's preparedness with the applications.

*Bernard D asked the board to compare programs in other towns, for example: KP charges some fees while Foxborough charges no fees.

Debbie Spinelli replied that the budget reflects that the public does not want to charge fees for buses and sports. The Athletic Dept. runs very lean – only the AD and their secretary are salaried. All other coaches and support staff are on a stipend basis.

*Jessica A asked about outside funding sources.

Bill Yukna asserted that the school Department goes after all grants that Foxborough qualifies for. Additionally, other revenue sources are administered in a market sensitive manner. For example: auditorium rental – the schools make sure its rates are in line with other towns, while insuring that the charges cover costs: heating, custodians and security. Extended Day programs are self-funded and any extra dollars go back to the school budget. The town makes an effort to stay under that fee at the YMCA. Athletic field usage fees go directly to the town/Recreation Department.

*Brent asked about the school's foreign exchange system.

Debbie Spinelli voiced that the Foxborough system is 'super'. Students pay tuition and eventually, with continued participation rates increasing, a revolving account can be created to budget the program. The schools are looking to improve marketing in order to attract more candidates. For now, the town contracts with Cambridge International for advertising to students and administering the process.

Beverly Lord spoke to the revenue concern by making note of the anticipated completion of the Sam Berns Field site. With the addition of stands and other structures, the 'rentability' to outside interests will create a self-funding mechanism that will be used to maintain the facility.

9:30

The School Board voted to adjourn.

9:37

Vote to accept minutes from previous meetings:

November 16th, 2016

Sean M - 1st, Brent R - 2nd 9 - 0 - 1 to accept

January 4th, 2017

{with correction to Jessica A comment}

Javed H - 1st, Brent - 2nd 9 - 0 - 1 to accept

9:45

The issue of discussion on the Train Station was raised. It was agreed that a letter would be sent to the Selectmen requesting more information.

Motion to adjourn:

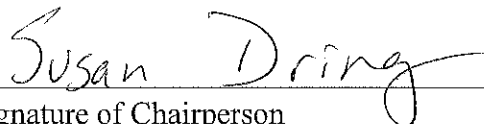
Thom F - 1st, Javed H - 2nd

Notes taken by Matthew Mackenzie, Thom Freeman

February 1, 2017 Minutes approved by Vote of the Advisory Committee.

Date of Meeting: 03/1/17

Vote: 9-0-2

Handwritten signature of Susan Dring in cursive script.

Signature of Chairperson

Handwritten signature of the Secretary, appearing to be 'MARTIN', in cursive script.

Signature of Secretary