



Town of Swampscott

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 2, 2020

1st Floor Conference Room, Swampscott Town Hall
22 Monument Avenue, Swampscott, MA 01907

MEMBERS PRESENT

Tim Dorsey (Chair), Mary Ellen Fletcher (Vice Chair), Gail Rosenberg, Cinder McNerney, Eric Hartmann, Matthew Kirschner, Jill Sullivan

MEMBERS ABSENT: James Goldman

OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Ron Mendes (Assistant Town Administrator); Allie Fiske (Assistant to the Town Administrator); Pam Angelakis (Superintendent of Schools); Gargi Cooper (School Committee Chair); Martha Sybert (School Business Administrator); Martha Raymond (Assistant Superintendent of Student Services)

Chairman Tim Dorsey called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 7:00pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

DISCUSSION OF SCHOOL DEPARTMENT BUDGET:

School Business Administrator Martha Sybert and Superintendent Pamela Angelakis stepped through a presentation of the proposed FY21 School Budget. The budget indicates an increase to \$30,690,887 a 2.9% increase, or \$870,484 over FY20. The objectives of the budget are to sustain strong and effective programs, keep class sizes in desirable range, reprioritize staff and funds, explore opportunities for improvement seeking out mutually beneficial partnerships.

There was a discussion regarding the mechanics of teacher pay lane changes, how the school administration is notified by teachers when they have completed activities that warrant lane changes, and how this affects budgeting.

The committee discussed the changing demographics of the schools. There has been a 138% increase in English Language Learners from 52 to 124 between FY10 and FY20. Economically disadvantaged students increased by 76% or 153 students. There has been a 31.7% increase in students with disabilities over the last 10 years. Additional staffing (teachers, guidance counselors, psychologists, etc.) has been procured to service the increase in these populations.

It was noted that at the Spring Town Meeting, there is an intention to request a Special Education Transfer from the Revolving Fund in the amount of \$200,000.

The school will be bringing in a consultant to review best practice scheduling to determine how to coordinate the daily school schedules to determine how they can be aligned between schools in order to permit the schools to share services and teacher resources.

There was a discussion about the operations of the sick-leave buyback program. Currently funding for this comes out of the Town's budget.

The Committee reviewed the schools' strategy regarding Circuit Breaker Funds, which is a state special education reimbursement program for the previous year's expenses. The program was put in place by the state to help defray the expense to local school districts for providing legally mandated special education supports and services to children with severe disabilities. The School is practicing the advisable strategy of carrying forward Circuit Breaker funds each year in order to mitigate emergency unforeseen circumstances. Swampscott may be eligible for additional extraordinary relief funds in the future.

Ms. Sybert reviewed revenue, including federal, state, and private grants equaling \$1,981,338, a decrease in \$129,081 since FY20. There was a discussion about the METCO grant program and how the METCO program operates and what expenses from the operating budget are used to support the program.

There was a discussion on how revolving funds are utilized. There are 20 funds which are established for a specific revenue source and expenses. For instance, school rental revenue offsets electrical and maintenance operations. Ms. Sybert and Ms. Angelakis explained why funds for the School Lunch program are carried over each year – to be able to purchase equipment and food at the beginning of the year before the receipt of any revenue from lunch payments. If a revolving fund is depleted and expenses are due, the School Committee can approve transfers from the school general fund.

There was a brief conversation about technology and capital expenses. Ms. Angelakis expressed that there is an intention to attempt to incorporate these costs into the school budget in the future rather than continue to consider tech expenses a capital expense. Ms. Sybert expressed that different communities approach technology expenses differently.

Mr. Dorsey recommended that calculations, formulas, and the way past data is published be consistent between the School Dept. and Town Administrator to ensure that all information is consistent. When that's not possible, notate why there are discrepancies.

There was a discussion about the athletics funding and current enrollment in programs.

Ms. Fletcher expressed concern that there was some confusion regarding comparative statistics with other districts because of how each community classifies expenses with DESE, and how Swampscott classifies these as well.

On **MOTION** (Ms. Fletcher) **SECONDED** (Ms. Rosenberg) it was **VOTED** (unanimous) to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 8:52pm

True Attest,

Allie Fiske, Assistant to the Town Administrator

Minutes APPROVED by vote of the Finance Committee 04/06/2020