



BUDGET COMMITTEE
Town of Hollis
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Minutes of December 22, 2010

Meeting was held in the Community Room, Hollis Town Hall. The Budget Committee was called to order by Chris Hyde, Chairman at 7:00 PM.

Members present: Chris Hyde, Chairman; Mike Harris, Tom Gehan, Susan Benz, Frank Whittemore, Tom Jambard

Also present: Bill Beaugard, Chairman-Hollis School Board, Rob Mann. Rich Manley, Susan Hodgdon, Mark McLaughlin, Rich Raymond, Betsy Cox-Buteau, Liz Allen, Candy Fowler, Amy Bottomley, Jeanne Saunders, Chris Siegfried

School Board Presentation: Bill Beaugard

Bill B. spent time reviewing the budget guidance formula and how the recommended base budget (\$9.9MM) was arrived at. This includes Special Ed, but not warrant articles. Zero percent guidance means that this number will remain the same from this year (FY11) to next year (FY12). Chris H. questioned where the ARA federal stimulus grant money was shown in the budget as a one-time revenue and how it was spent. Of particular concern was making sure it was removed from next years' budget. It was explained that the money was never included in the budget, that the purpose of this money was that it be spent on things outside the budget, and that the school would be reimbursed after the expenditures had been made and approved at the state level. Chris H. was concerned and wanted to research a bit more on the rules surrounding these grants.

Multiple adjustments/corrections were made to the budget spreadsheet during the meeting. The total gross budget came out at approximately \$10.96MM, and the requested budget was therefore \$32K under guidance.

Bill B. then discussed enrollments. The enrollment reported to the state for this year was 667, but due to additional enrollments the current number is 673, which is identical to last year. Projections for next year are at 650. Based upon Ed. Specs., the number of classroom sections will remain the same.

Chris H. mentioned the fact that the cost per student has gone from \$16,860 this year to \$17,542 for next year, which represents a 4% increase. Bill B. explained that the administration is exploring with other similar towns (including Brookline) to see where and why our costs might be abnormally high. The information will be available by the next meeting.

Expected benefits costs have gone up \$40K, or approximately 1%. This could change based on the outcome of the union negotiations. Maintenance costs are up primarily due to increased costs of contracts for systems maintenance. Sp. Ed. costs are down due to a decrease in the anticipated number of students in the program from 88 to 56. Transportation costs are being renegotiated this year and therefore may change.

Capital improvements- Parking lots at both schools need attention, HPS being the worse of the two. Money is being set aside in the fund for this and other things. The SAU building needs some minor repairs before it can be turned back over to the town. A backup power supply to the water pumping system also needs to be considered, along with updating the agreement that governs how the costs are shared by the various entities. The presence of an abandoned well behind the middle school was brought up as a potential

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source of water for irrigation or firefighting purposes.

Negotiations on the Collective Bargaining Agreements have both gone to mediation, but the outcome should be available by the next meeting. The other significant issue that could affect the budget is the need to maintain computer technology/IT at both schools.

Public Input:

Basil Mason reiterated that those on a fixed income aren't able to keep up with increasing taxes. Schools should be required to make due with what they have, rather than getting new equipment every year. Times are tough, and a high percentage of folks in town can't afford increases.

Bob Labednick warned that the school board should be prepared for state funding to drop off. As the state copes with budget deficits, school funding will inevitably decline. The school districts should have a plan to work more efficiently now in anticipation of lower budgets, because that is what is in their future.

Tom Enright would like to see a category by category comparison between Hollis and Brookline.

Iris Realmuto requested that Ed. Specs. be kept where they are.

Committee Input:

Frank W. would like to see a full time equivalent report. Bill B. said that it is available on the web and has been circulated to the board. Iris asked whether any changes should be made to the web content to make it more simple/accessible. The consensus was that it is fine the way it is. Frank W. asked what can be done to keep costs associated with new technology under control. Bill explained that some of the computers are running with operating systems that are over 10 years old and are no longer supported by the vendor.

Current software often won't run on these old systems.

Tom J. recommended that we look carefully at the water system before dumping a lot of money into it.

Tom G. asked whether there is a contingency fund and if so what it can be used for. Mike H. detailed how much it is and what is done with it. Tom G. was thinking that it was an actual trust fund, not a budget line item.

Susan B. wanted to thank Bill B. and Jeanne S. for all of their hard work in preparation for this presentation.

Chris H. thanked the entire school board and administrative staff for their long hours and excellent job done.

Motion to adjourn was made by Mike H. and seconded by Tom J. Meeting adjourned: 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Kowalski, Tax Collector