



**OFFICE OF THE  
Advisory Board  
TOWN HALL  
511 MAIN STREET  
DUNSTABLE, MA 01827-1313  
(978) 649-4514 x222 FAX (978) 649-4371  
finance@dunstable-ma.gov**

February 6, 2017

Present: Amie Stevens, Harold Simmons, Christine Muir, Ron Mikol, Pam Crocker,  
Absent: Dana Metzler  
Also present: Tracey Hutton

- Christine opened the meeting with the highway department line item
  - Tracey noted the highway expense rental/lease for \$15K is needed but they cut on other line items to get close to half the \$15K.
  - This lease will be for 3 years, to buy a truck would be close to \$45K.
    - Peter Gove was present from the highway department and stated that the lease is an important need this year.
  - Christine asked if the highway department thinks this is an appropriate budget.
    - Peter stated he did think appropriate but he thinks the paving line item is a bit low.
    - Tracey confirmed that she is working with the department on a pavement management plan. This probably will not be ready until Spring.
  - Ron asked about the \$15K expense lease item, what is the term? Tracy confirmed 3 years. Ron asked if this would need a warrant article for the last two years of it.
    - Tracy confirms that anything over 3 years need to be voted and approved at town meeting. 3 years or below does not need to be approved.
    - A member of the audience asked if we had the option to buy the truck after the lease term
      - Tracy confirmed we do have the option.
  - Christine noted that the snow operations line item has been the same for three years. She asked Peter if this is sufficient. Peter stated that no one year is the same so it is hard to forecast.
    - Line item 003 was combined into 004. i.e. "babin" into outside snow removal plowing.
  - Christine asked how much was actually cut from this budget.
    - Tracy confirmed it was about \$7K. they only grew by \$7K which is half the new truck lease expense.
- Next item on the agenda was the water department then the library. Christine asked if we can go over the library first.
  - Tracey confirmed 20% in the library other supplies of \$31,792. 2017 was \$31,859. This adheres to the state's mandated guidelines.
  - The Library Director (LD) confirmed that their ultimate goal is to make the state MAR guidelines/certifications.
  - The LD confirmed that this budget will add Saturdays back to the schedule

- Christine asked the LD to confirm that all line items are correct, there were some discrepancies last year in hours etc.
- Christine asked about the rear exit and the issue with the snow and ice removal and when that will be put into the budget.
  - Tracey confirmed she didn't think this would be in the 2018 capital plan. This could change.
  - Ron asked how much we have already spent on architectural plans. Tracey confirmed we have spent \$10K on design documents thus far.
- LD confirmed by mid next week we should hear if we receive the waiver from FY17 breach of the certification.
- Christine moved the discussion to the water department.
  - Representatives from water at the meeting are Carl Huber and Mark Cullen.
  - Christine summarized the water department project. We have an aging water system. There was an article at last year town meeting to fix the water infrastructure with funds from an override and it failed.
  - Water department is working with Tighe and Bond on a second proposal. The board heard this proposal last week. Proposal is to replace both hydropneumatic tanks, rehabilitate well 1 and replace most of piping throughout the system with larger pipes. Current pricing is close to \$2.1MM.
  - Christine stated that when she read the report she thought they were suggesting the MUD district as a location
    - Carl stated he does not 100% agree with the recommendation b/c of mixology issues.
    - He also stated that he thinks they are focusing on accessibility which is why they are focusing on MUD.
      - Carl is worried that there are a lot of unknown factors in MUD, i.e. ownership, development etc.
    - Christine asked who owns the decision on where to put the tanks
      - Carl stated that its the water department and they are having the discussions now
  - Carl suggested that we are priced out of any grant options due to the Town's median income but may be able to get a good loan term. Tracey suggested it would be less than 40 but more than 20 years. The interest rate in October was roughly 2.5%, less than a percent if we tried to finance on our own.
  - Going back to Tighe and Bond proposal, Christine stated that the report they currently have states their fee would be \$145K for the engineering work.
  - Harold expressed frustration that this has been ongoing for 10 years with little progress.
    - Carl stated that he believes this is mainly because of financing constraints.
  - Christine stated that she thinks this could get town support this year with proper education
    - Residents need to understand the difference between this ask and last year.
    - Why is this important?
    - Accountability for the engineering fees.
  - Tracey has been having meetings with the water commissioners to help streamline and coordinate all the pieces, i.e. MUD proposal, water proposal etc.
    - It was agreed that Tracey could help be the bridge between the other boards to move the proposals along. This is something we haven't had in the past.

- Christine stated that we as a board would need to find the \$145K for the engineering costs.
  - Tracey stated that historically the board has funded engineering costs through 3 year notes.
- Amie asked if we are exploring other engineering options.
  - Tracey mentioned that Carl has explored other firms on an informal basis.
  - Ron stated that he thought we should not explore other engineering firms at this point as there is not enough time.
    - He doesn't see the value add of exploring other firms at this point.
    - He would rather spend money on marketing and selling this project to the community.
      - Tracey stated that she may have access to grant money to help market this project to the community in 2018.
- Christine asked how we can coordinate efforts between the main St. housing initiative and the water efforts. Can timing be synced up?
  - Tracey confirmed that she will help coordinate but that the pipes for the main street housing is not in the current scope of the water project
    - Tracey confirmed that this project only has pipe from pond street to post office. If the MUD district gets developed, the developer will be responsible for this piping.
- Pam asked about the restrictions of educating the public on these types of projects.
  - It was stated that we can speak about it until the warrant articles are written.
- Christine moved the conversation to the GDRSD funding options.
  - Christine stated that we should look at the capital plan of the school and see what we would be willing/able to fund.
  - Christine noted that the window replacement that Ron mentioned a month ago was not in the capital summary.
    - An audience member who is on the school committee noted that the windows are in the capital plan, just not included on the summary page.
    - Christine asked for a prioritized list
      - The audience member also noted that they are looking to pull all of the Florence Roche capital needs out of the plan as this may be able to be funded through a grant.
        - Christine noted that Dunstable does not have any students at FloRo so this would not affect Dunstable.
  - Christine asked if we can use CPA funds for the Swallow union walkway, \$50K.
    - Ron thinks that this should be revisited and that maybe it could qualify.
    - Harold doesn't think that these would qualify.
  - Christine asked about the news story about Dunstable getting an additional assessment of \$160K, on top of the \$223K estimated.
- Ron is worried that the capital needs of the schools are understated and the capital plan is not accurate.
  - He is concerned this will end up costing the towns much more than is projected on the plan.

- Christine stated that the methods of funding capital improvements could come from debt exclusions, grants, operating reserves and potentially CPA funds.
- The audience member from the SC stated that the capital plan was done by committee members and there wasn't an engineering firm hired.
  - Ron was on the capital committee and stated they had expertise on the board.
- There is a school committee meeting tomorrow night in regards to a list of priorities for the upcoming FY. They will share the findings with the board as soon as we have them.
- Sustainability committee
  - Tracey confirmed that we are supplying models to the sub committee of the sustainability committee.
- Public safety
  - Still deciding on a location and design of the building. one or two story etc.
- Capital planning
  - Chair has been out of town, hope to meet on the 27th.
- Town Report
  - Christine shared the town report content she drafted. Christine asked Ron when the Triboard met. He confirmed last meeting was 2015. This will be included in the town report content.
- Christine and Amie confirmed we will approve the 1/23/17 meetings at next meeting on 2/13.
- New business
  - \$157,900 is the change in assessment from GDRSD to Dunstable due to increase in student population.
  - Essex Aggie annual transportation increased from previous year.
  - Greater Lowell Vocational debt has gone up from \$37,137 to \$46,621
    - Christine thought the number would be closer to \$41,000
  - Total deficit is now \$233,180 for the warrant article.
    - Christine is concerned about continuing to use free cash but does not see another option.
  - Christine stated that we are scheduled to have the Police chief present at next week's meeting and then Fire on the 27th.
- Christine brought the conversation back to GDRSD
  - Groton's new assessment would be \$421,105 and Dunstable is putting in \$304,000.
  - We were paying 22.23%, now we pay 22.88%.
  - Cost per pupil is \$13,253.
- Ron asked what happens when we close town hall for snow etc, are all employees paid?
  - Tracey stated that this includes the library and town hall.
  - The town policy is that when the school closes, the town hall and the library both close.
    - There was discussion on why this was put in place.
    - This is the policy approved by the Selectman.
  - Ron stated that this is a finance issue as well since we are paying employees for these days.
  - Christine stated that this is a selectmen policy
- A motion to transfer \$1550 from reserve fund to selectmen repairs and maintenance, a new hot water tank for the town rental property.
  - Ron made a motion to approve, pam seconded, all approved.
- An audience member asked how much of the override from last year was spent on the schools.

- Christine and Tracey commented that it was a total override for both municipal and school, it wasn't specified what percentage was spent on which group.
- Tracey also confirmed that there will be an educational piece that will go out to the residents on the basics of town finances, i.e. estimated tax bills, overrides etc.
- Harold motioned that we adjourn, Ron seconded, all approved.