



**OFFICE OF THE  
Advisory Board  
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**January 22, 2020**

Present: Marie Gamache, Kieran Meehan, Bob Nelson, Harold Simmons, Leo Tometich  
Also attending: Town Administrator Brian Palaia, Town Accountant Theresa Walsh, Police Chief Dow, Public

Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m.

**FY2021 Budget Town Administrator Update and Discussion**

Note that this discussion relates to the Dunstable FY21 budget as of this date and will change as new information is available.

While much of the municipal budget is reasonably well known, some expenses like insurance and retirement costs are largely defined by external factors. The GDRSD is a regional collaboration with significant budget impact that evolves each year to reach a spending consensus. The police officer union contract is up for renewal adding another unknown to the FY21 budget.

1. GDRSD FY21 budget.
  - 1.1. As of Jan. 22, 2020 the GDRSD proposed Dunstable assessment is approximately \$306,000 higher than in the proposed Dunstable budget.
  - 1.2. The school budget may be approximately \$60,000 lower.
  - 1.3. Annual adjustment of the Dunstable to Groton student ratio may increase the Dunstable assessment.
  - 1.4. When the TA attended a school committee meeting there did not seem to be much concern regarding Dunstable budget constraints.
  - 1.5. Some comments at the school committee meeting indicated that the GDRSD 5-year budget projections may be low.
  - 1.6. More information would be helpful to understand the major GDRSD budget increase drivers.
2. This Dunstable FY21 budget includes a 2% cost of living allowance increase and pay step increases when appropriate for non-union municipal employees. A 1% COLA increase to non-union employees increases the budget by approximately \$10,000. The COLA increase is approximately double for union employees.
3. New police department cruisers are transitioning to hybrid vehicle technology with higher initial costs. Fuel savings TBD. Green Communities funding may supplement town funding enough to lease a hybrid Explorer.
4. The water system monitoring company, Small Water Systems, cost may increase 3% for FY21.
5. It appears that new revenue sources, like the 91 River Street solar project, will not be online to provide any FY21 revenue.
6. Some discussion about whether the select board would support an operating budget override. Going forward we will need to annotate specific override needs and dollar costs to help define a potential proposition 2½ override amount. The tax rate sheet will help determine the override impact.

**Miscellaneous**

1. The capital planning committee met this afternoon. They would like to review capital needs with department heads, and then provide capital planning needs feedback in 2-3 weeks.
2. Is there a defined road pothole reporting mechanism?
3. The Board of Health would like to start charging town departments for trash disposal. Police Chief Dow okay with paying for trash disposal. Probably okay.
4. The water department may need approximately \$30,000 from the current FY20 budget, likely from free cash, until water rate increases cover operating costs.
5. Joan Simmons suggested that a town center overlay district could potentially bring in some future revenue.

Motion to adjourn - Kieran, - 2<sup>nd</sup> Harold. Vote: Unanimous to adjourn  
Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.