

Board of Selectmen Meeting:
Memorial Town Hall Conference Room

March 5, 2020 @ 6:30pm
Brian Moriarty, Chairman
Approved: Dec. 1, 2020

Present: Selectmen Brian Moriarty, Edmund Jaworski, Diana Szynal and
Finance Committee: Darryl Williams, Sean Barry, Diane Brozowski, Betsy Rider
Also present- John Robert, School Superintendent, Heather Cahill, Sharon Strzegowski

Selectman Moriarty opened the meeting at 6:30pm.

The Board met with the Finance Committee to discuss the School Department FY21 budget, and projected shortfall.

Mr. Williams said the school is looking for direction regarding the budget. It's necessary to look at options. Mr. Robert said he's not had to come to the Board like this before. The school has used school choice money as stabilization. He has made some cuts amounting to about \$30,000.

Spec ed costs have gone up. A second student had to be placed out of district. It costs \$180/day to transport 1 child to Chicopee and back. Mr. Robert explained 10 lane changes and said this is more money for teachers getting masters plus degrees. Ms. Rider said there are negatives for FY20 and 21. Mr. Williams noted that according to Justin Cole, there is a discrepancy from FY18 going into FY19.

Ms. Strzegowski met with the new accountant today. FY19 numbers are different from the treasurer to the accountants. We will live with the 18 numbers because those were audited. Now there's still discrepancy but we are hoping this is just a timing issue. Mr. Robert said we basically don't know what we have but interaction with Melanson Heath is feeling more positive. Financially we won't be ready to pass a budget before Annual Town Meeting. Selectman Moriarty said we need a clarification of funds.

Selectman Szynal asked when Melanson might have more numbers. Ms. Strzegowski said it might be easy if it's a timing issue. Selectman Moriarty suggested Mr. Robert and Ms. Cahill plan on the 2% budget. Selectman Moriarty trusts the schools saying that the money is there. The problem is there's been trouble keeping track of it for years. Mr. Williams questioned why we are having budget meetings if we have no numbers. Mr. Barry said if school records are correct, then money maybe was booked somewhere else. Mr. Robert said he still doesn't know what he has from previous years.

Mr. Barry observed that the intent of school choice wasn't to fund 30% of the schools' budget. Mr. Robert said Hatfield numbers are so small that you cannot run the school system without school choice. Selectman Moriarty said it became a crutch. School choice money was used to pay for spec ed. Perhaps a spec ed fund could be created. Mr. Williams said this raises a discussion for a prop 2.5 override. Schools are not the only place where we're struggling. Ms. Rider noted we were lucky this year that health insurance didn't go up.

The Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen continued a discussion of a possible proposition 2.5 override with Selectman Moriarty stating it should be left up to the townspeople. Hatfield has never asked for an override but has done debt exclusions. Ms. Strzegowski noted the \$1.6 mil for the Route 5 project has to be requested this year. She also said she trusts Brenda Keir's numbers. Selectman Szynal said she believes a 2.5 override is coming.

The School committee will go through the budget line by line and will discuss worst case scenarios and priorities. After further discussion it was suggested and agreed that the budget conversation should happen after there are better numbers. Mr. Williams said he wants to see something solid.

Selectman Szynal said the Board could cancel the meeting scheduled for the 10th and hold the 16th meeting when we will have more information. Mr. Williams wants to hear it from Melanson Heath and wants them to come to the meeting. Mr. Williams summarized that Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen will meet here on the 16th, but not yet include departments. Melanson Heath will be asked to come in to that meeting.

Ms. Michonski has cut ties with Justin Cole. Things we thought he had done were not done. There will be additional costs for accounting. FY20 payroll was not done correctly. Selectman Moriarty mentioned a meeting on the 19th after the financial team meeting. Ms. Michonski is to request that Melanson Heath attend the meeting of the 16th.

Selectman Szynal moved to adjourn. Selectman Jaworski seconded. The motion was approved. The meeting ended at 7:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ki J. Eno
Executive Assistant