

**TOWN OF DEERFIELD
MUNICIPAL BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
October 28, 2014
MINUTES**

Call to Order:

6:35pm - The meeting was called to order.

Present: Harriet Cady, David Carbone, Karen Cote, Jeff Kelley, Carol Levesque, and Brendan O'Donnell Members; Maryann Clark, School Board Rep; Andrew Robertson, Select Board Rep

Absent: Kevin Verville, Chairman; Jim Spillane, Vice Chair; Fred McGarry Member

Also Present: Peter Menard, School Board Member

Town Budget Update

Selectman Robertson spoke that the Town's 2015 Operating Budget and Warrant Articles are just about complete. Key Warrant Articles will include the purchase of a Fire Command Vehicle (\$40,000), a new building to house the Swap Shop at the Transfer Station (\$31,000-\$35,000), a new storage building for the Highway Department (\$73,000), establishing a revolving fund for Special Detail monies, and support to help the town of Northwood help fight the spread of Milfoil on Northwood Lake (\$3,000-\$5,000). He voiced support for the measure to create a revolving fund and Milfoil work. The revolving fund would cover Special Details performed by the Fire, Police, Rescue or Highway Departments and by working these assignments the Town stands to generate some revenue. Regarding Milfoil, he noted that Northwood Lake is located partially in Deerfield and that if the spread continues the Milfoil would negatively impact property values for Deerfield residents on the Lake.

The Select Board met earlier in the week and has preliminarily agreed to use approximately \$250,000 from the capital reserves to offset taxes. This will result in a rate increase of \$0.40-\$0.45 per \$1,000 of assessed property value and will leave roughly 8% of the Operating Budget held in reserve. This has not yet been accepted or adopted by the DRA.

The Town is on track to be in range with the 2014 budget. The pump at the Fire Department has been replaced at a cost of \$14,000. That Department is likely to be overspent this year.

H. Cady asked whether a new Highway Building was already part of the Capital Improvement Plan, Selectman Robertson responded that, due to the work the current and prior Highway Agents have done to maintain the current shed there are no immediate plans to replace that facility. He added that the Board is expecting a presentation by the Fire Chief outlining plans for an addition to the Fire House at the Town's center.

School Budget Update

M. Clark spoke that through the close of the 2013-2014 fiscal year, the School's final surplus amount was \$74,031. The Board had previously retained \$156,000 in its capital reserves, they have since voted to return \$120,000 to the Town to offset the 2015 tax rate, bringing the reserve account balance to \$110,031. H. Cady asked for an additional explanation of the process. M. Clark detailed that, per RSA 198.5, the School is permitted to retain up to 2.5% of the School's net assessment each year. The SAU provides what that amount is and the Board votes on how to proceed. For this year the 2.5% allowed to be held in reserve was \$242,957.

M. Clark encouraged Committee members to visit the rear of the School and see the paving project that has been completed. \$30,954 of the \$35,000 approved by Warrant Article was spent to complete this

phase of the project. H. Cady asked whether there would be another Warrant Article put forward this year, M. Clark answered that it has not yet been discussed. Attendance rates were provided. For the 2013-2014 school year the student count opened at 469 and closed with 487. The 2014-2015 school year has opened with 495 students. M. Clark will clarify whether these are student bodies or full time equivalents.

Finally, M. Clark updated the Committee on the recent changes made to the Alternative High School policy. Following a Public Forum where the School Board received much community feedback, the Board has voted to eliminate the lottery process and to utilize RSA 193.3 for any future Alternative High School requests. Under this law families have two courses of action for pursuing attendance at a High School other than the school of record. The first option is to apply to the SAU Superintendent and to provide evidence as to why the change is in the Best Interest of the Student. The second option would be for the family to apply to the School Board under the Manifest Hardship guidelines. The District will pay the full cost of tuition at all placed schools. This RSA gives the Superintendent the ability to reassign up to 5% of the graduating class.

M. Clark spoke that this approach brings Deerfield in line with all other Districts and, as a result, the Superintendent will have a greater pool of resources and guidance from which to draw in making her determinations. P. Menard spoke that the focus of the new laws surrounding Alternative High School choice is that the District policy cannot discriminate against a family in terms of cost. The Board felt that it may be legally indefensible to ask for families to pay for any additional tuition costs. C. Levesque noted that some Districts in the State do require that the families pay the difference in tuition and asked what is happening there. M. Clark answered that she can't speak to each individual situation, but that there are some cases where policies are being legally challenged and Deerfield did not want to put itself in a position where it may be exposed to future litigation. P. Menard spoke that the School Board is trying to steer the most prudent course.

C. Levesque asked, if a student's application is rejected by the Superintendent, can they then apply to the School Board under the Manifest Hardship terms? M. Clark responded yes, but noted that she cannot speak to timelines as there is no deadline for either course of action under the law. She added that, in addition to approval from the Superintendent, the prospective student would also need to receive acceptance from the alternative school and there would need to be communication between the Superintendents. Clarification was made that Coe Brown is not a private High School. It is one of two in the State classified as a "Public Academy" where it is run by a Headmaster and a Board of Trustees.

Old Business None

New Business None

Citizens Comments None

Adjourn:

Motion: H. Cady moves to adjourn the meeting of October 28, 2014

Second: M. Clark

All in Favor – Motion Carries – Meeting Adjourned @ 7:05pm

Next Meeting Tuesday, November 25th @ 6:30p

The Minutes were Recorded, Transcribed and Respectfully Submitted by Katie Libby.

Pending Approval by the Municipal Budget Committee