

**TOWN OF DEERFIELD
MUNICIPAL BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
December 9, 2014
MINUTES**

Call to Order

6:30p - The meeting was called to order.

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Vice Chairman Spillane asked all to rise and pledge allegiance to the Flag.

Moment of Silent Reflection

Roll Call

Present: Jim Spillane, Vice Chair; David Carbone, Karen Cote, Jeff Kelley, Carol Levesque, Fred McGarry and Brendan O'Donnell Members; Maryann Clark, School Board Rep; Andrew Robertson, Select Board Rep

Excused: Kevin Verville, Chairman; Harriet Cady, Member

Also Present: Jan Foisy, Finance Director; Penny Touchette, Assessing Department

Discussion and Review of the 2015 Town Budget

Revaluation of Property - \$176,708

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves the amount of \$176,708

Second: M. Clark

Discussion: Selectman Robertson noted that the Select Board has discussed adding an additional 3 hours/week for the Assessing Clerk to increase availability to the public to answer any questions that come about from the revaluation. The decision has not been finalized, but may result in an adjustment to the budget. He went on to describe that the Board had solicited competitive quotes for this process, the AVATAR contract offers a 5-year guarantee on the standard contract, assessing and data verification, and because their software is already in use by the Town other vendors could not come close to the price quoted. Additionally, the AVATAR contract includes utilities valuation services that will save the Town approximately \$16,000 from the current arrangement with appraiser San Soucie. The last property revaluation was done in 2010 at a 5-year cost of \$293,276. This contract, including utility appraisals, is for \$229,401. Additionally, the contract has been reviewed and approved by the DRA.

Vice Chairman Spillane asked whether the requirement was to conduct this revaluation five years from the start or conclusion of the last. Selectman Robertson answered the start, the Town has undergone property revaluations in 2000, 2005, 2010 and now will commence for 2015. He added that in 2010 when the Town ran out of money and was unable to complete its revaluations, AVATER agreed to release Deerfield from the remainder of its nearly \$59,000 commitment in a very gracious manner. The budget includes nearly \$30,000 for anticipated legal expenses related to the FairPoint and PSNH properties.

F. McGarry asked how the contract is broken down, Selectman Robertson answered that in the first year, 2015, \$229,000 is owed and will be billed in monthly installments of \$9,668.75. Years 2-5 (2016 – 2019) will be for \$28,344/year, billed at \$2,362/month.

C. Leveque found that, during the last revaluation, assessing, especially on the Lake properties, lacked consistency and asked that the same AVATAR employee assess all property on the water. P. Touchette answered that typically one person handles data collection while a singular employee sets the values based on that data. She added that the Assessing office and AVATER are happy to answer any questions or areas of concern throughout the process.

Vote to approve the bottom line of \$176,708: Yea 9, Nay 0, Abstained 0 – Motion Carries

Receipt and Overview of the 2015-2016 School Budget

M. Clark reviewed the highlights of the proposed 2015-2016 school budget. Overall the bottom line is up less than 0.25% with a total proposed amount of \$12,151,678, an increase of \$29,614. If rejected, the default budget would be \$12,120,781, or \$30,897 less than that proposed. Major decreases from the 2014-2015 budget are found in the High School Tuition (down \$298,523) and Special Education Out of District Placements (down \$119,940). Concord High School tuition is expected to be \$12,570/student and Coe Brown \$14,840. Increases are seen in the Salary (up \$179,037), Special Education Summer Transportation (up \$25,577), Health Insurance (up \$120,719) and Teacher Retirement (up \$102,883) lines. The salary increase reflects the plans to add an additional teacher for the current Kindergarten class, 2014-2015's First graders and the increase in the Retirement figure is attributed to State rate changes.

Vice Chairman Spillane asked why the Sabbatical figures seemed to be duplicated both as their own line and as a footnote under the Teacher's Salaries. M. Clark answered that the stand-alone Sabbatical line on page 10 is the 50% pay owed the teacher on leave and the Sabbatical funds included under the Salaries line is the money to hire a teacher to replace that individual for the school year.

The Schools Technology Coordinator, Maintenance Director and Athletic Director will attend the December 16th MBC meeting and M. Clark encouraged members to forward any questions through the Chair in advance of that meeting. She also encouraged members to review the estimated revenue information provided and to make note of some of the increases and decreases on that side of the balance sheet.

M. Clark went over the data provided on enrollment projections. The School Board had discussed adding another Kindergarten teacher, but has decided against that. The current projected enrollment is 513, but the true number of students is impossible to know. J. Kelley asked what the School would do if it is again surprised in the fall by the Kindergarten enrollments, will they stay the course or consider adding another teacher. M. Clark responded that the question was very difficult to answer, adding that at this point the 2014-2015 Kindergarten class size appears to have been an anomaly. Vice Chairman Spillane asked whether a half day Kindergarten was part of the conversation, M. Clark answered that she can't say 100%, but she does not foresee that happening.

The DCS Expendable Trust Funds were reviewed. The School has not yet finalized Warrant Articles, but has discussed adding no additional money to Special Education or Facilities Repair. They are considering additions of \$10,000 to Technology, \$25,000 to Facility Paving, and \$35,000 to the Playground funds.

Finally, M. Clark presented the allocation of the SAU Budgets where Deerfield's projected share totaled \$290,209. C. Levesque asked whether the revaluation of the property would affect these numbers. M. Clark answered that the valuation data lags a year, any impact to this calculation would not be realized until the following budgeting cycle. Regarding High School tuition, C. Levesque noted that the calculations include Concord High School and Coe Brown, but could they change if students attend somewhere outside of those two schools? M. Clark answered yes; that the number proposed assumes that the Superintendent will maximize the 5% allowed to attend alternative schools and uses the Coe Brown tuition because that is currently the highest of the alternative schools available.

In closing M. Clark encouraged members to pose questions through the Chair in advance of next Tuesday's meeting, stating that doing so makes a big impact on the discussions.

Old Business None

New Business None

Citizens Comments

Tom Dillon of Haynes Rd questioned whether the School Board conducts thorough review of the SAU budget. He notes that it has gone up 5% and asked whether the services provided have also increased 5%. M. Clark responded that all members of the DCS School Board also serve on the SAU Board. They have a meeting where they are presented with the SAU budget and then have an opportunity to review, discuss, change as appropriate and ultimately vote on it. Mr. Dillon also spoke that he finds the Middle School projected enrollment numbers to be wildly out of range with the School Board's acceptable target. The average class size is roughly 15 students when the School Board's recommended class size is 21. He encouraged members to ask the tough questions and consider whether reducing a Middle School teacher may avoid needing to add a new employee.

P. Menard responded that the School Board had asked the exact same question. The preliminary answer is that eliminating a Middle School teacher would gut some of the core math and science programs, but the Board is continuing to explore the issue.

K. Cote asked what impact the Common Core had on the proposed budgets, particularly relating to test preparation and materials. M. Clark spoke that the question had been asked and that the Board was told there is no increase to the budget attributable to Common Core. That may have been relating just to Technology, she will re-ask the question in more broad terms.

Adjourn:

Motion: Selectman Robertson moves to adjourn the meeting of December 9, 2014

Second: M. Clark

All in Favor – Motion Carries – Meeting Adjourned @ 7:28p

Next Meeting Tuesday, December 16th @ 6:30p

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

Pending Approval by the Municipal Budget Committee