

Town of Northbridge
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
March 16, 2016 at 6:00PM

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Finance Committee Attendees:

Finance Committee Members in Attendance: Plato Adams, Bob Brochu, Jim Barron, Lisa Ferguson and Steve Gogolinski

Finance Committee Member not in Attendance: Chris Thompson and Chris Pilla

Town of Northbridge Administration and Other Attendees:

Ted Kozak, Town Manager - Town of Northbridge

Neil Vaidya, Town Accountant - Town of Northbridge

Dr. Catherine Stickney, Superintendent of Schools, Town of Northbridge Public Schools

Melissa Walker, Business Manager, Town of Northbridge Public Schools.

Michael Lebrasseur - Chairperson - Town of Northbridge School Committee

Dr. Michael Fitzpatrick, Superintendent of Schools, Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional Schools District (BVT)

Joseph Hall - BVT School Committee Member (Representing Bellingham)

Jeff T. Koopman - BVT School Committee Member (Representing Northbridge)

Finance Committee Meeting

The meeting was called to order by the chairman; Plato Adams at 6:00PM.

Prior Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 9, 2016 was made by Lisa Ferguson, seconded by Steve Gogolinski and unanimously approved.

Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional Schools District (BVT)

Dr. Michael Fitzpatrick, Superintendent of Schools, Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional Schools District (BVT) presented the budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

Total expenditures reflect an increase of 3.00 %. Total member assessments realized a 4.36% increase which was driven by increased minimum contributions related to 17 additional students, significant increases in active and retiree health insurance (\$418k) and relatively flat state aid. The district continues to identify outside revenue sources and operational efficiencies that maintain facilities and enhance instruction.

The cost per student for Northbridge residents attending BVT is \$8,286. Note that compared to other schools within the local area - per the discussion BVT assesses minimal athletic and parking participation fees.

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A concern was raised over the number of students within the electric and HVACs / plumbing areas of study over the past five years in relation to the total population of all students. There are three full time instructors for the electrical field of study.

Out of the entire population there are approximately 10 students in total where English is the second language. Roughly 11% of the student population are Special Needs students with individual performance plans.

Town of Northbridge Public Schools

Dr. Catherine Stickney, Superintendent of Schools and Melissa Walker, Business Manager for the Town of Northbridge Public Schools presented the budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

The superintendent's recommended level services operating budget for FY17 reflects a \$1,101,180 or 4.35% increase over FY16.

The two largest increases in the FY budget are salaries, which increased by \$680,916 and out of district tuition/transportation which increased by \$434,961. NTA contract negotiations for FY17 have not been finalized and this budget reflects the Governor's currently proposed price freeze for out of district tuition rates.

The town contribution increased by \$378,160, resulting in the school department's appropriation increasing by \$425,000

Four positions will be reorganized to realign with current district needs and one position will be reduced.

Over \$2.9 million is being spent from revolver accounts to balance the budget, leaving \$1million in reserves.

The District may be faced with a \$1.2 million deficit for FY 18 before taking into account any necessary increases to the FY18 budget.

Additional support is needed for ELL students. There are approximately 53 ELL students with 9 different languages. The current staff level is 2 FTE and a request to add an additional 1.0 FTE ELL teacher is being proposed.

The fee for a student participating / playing a sport at Northbridge is \$250 each with no family cap. It was noted that students on reduced lunch programs could have the fee waived. Also, some parents volunteer to pay the fee for other students with limited means.

Public Hearing

At 7:37 PM a motion to open the Public Meeting was made by Jim Barron, seconded by Lisa Ferguson and unanimously approved.

It was noted by the Town Manager that the number of Planning Board zoning related articles has been increased and thus the total number of articles has currently increased to 30.

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A concerned citizen, Barry Gallant, 38 Kingsnorth Street, Whitinsville, MA requested Finance Committee Action on the Town Expenditure Expense Request to be frozen plus audit request for radio controlled town smart water meters.

Based on the discussion it was noted by Mr. Gallant that there is no legal written contract between the Town of Northbridge and the Whitinsville Water Co.

In May of 2015 the Town's Safety Committee reviewed Mr. Gallant's safety concerns relating to the Radio Controlled Smart Water Meters. The Town's Safety Committee forwarded Mr. Gallant's concerns to the Board of Selectmen stating it was under the Board of Selectmen authority. As of the date of this public hearing; the Board of Selectmen / Water Commissioners and Town Manager have not responded to Mr. Gallants Safety Concerns.

During the discussion; Plato Adams (Chairman of the Finance Committee) discussed the overall responsibility of the Finance Committee; which is to give recommendations on the various warrant articles for periodic town meetings and not the day to day financial management / operation of the town. It was suggested that these and future requests be brought to the attention of the Board of Selectmen.

At 8:00 PM a motion to close the Public Meeting was made by Jim Barron, seconded by Lisa Ferguson and unanimously approved.

Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be held on March 30, 2016 at 6:00PM. At this meeting the Finance Committee to vote positions on warrant articles.

Adjournment

Since no further business was to be transacted, a motion to adjourn at 8:05 PM was made by Lisa Ferguson, seconded by Steve Gogolinski and unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,



James P. Barron
Clerk

Town of Northbridge Finance Committee