

RTM Finance & Budget Committee - Regular Scheduled Meeting Minutes 12/15/2014

Present: J. Palen, R. Cardone, T. Duffy, M. Thorne, G. duPont, M. Banks, S. Anderson, K. Hoffman

Absent: J. Davis, D. Ritchie, A. Millar, B. Hayes, J. Boulton

With 8 of 13 members present consisting of quorum, J. Palen called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss preliminary thoughts on Town of Darien budget for 2015-2016 and timeline for F&B comments to Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and Board of Education.

J. Palen began the meeting by asking for comments on State of Town presentations and 5-Year budget distributed at December 8th RTM meeting. He added that the BOE was in the final stages of approval of the new teachers contract and that we should expect to see an agreement in the next 3 weeks. He noted that once distributed, RTM would have 45 days to do nothing, accept or reject. Committee had general discussion on the calendar in light of deadline.

S. Anderson brought up desire for Board of Ed or Board of Selectman to provide total cost of compensation of employees subject to new union contract, including full cost of benefits rather than just salary costs. J. Palen noted that it would be helpful to focus on the total cost of compensation rather than looking at the annual wage increases and step increases separately. J. Palen stated he would ask for full cost of compensation and summary of total costs.

J. Palen noted that capital project budget included new/re-turfing of certain high school fields, but that a portion of funding for these projects would come from DAF, reducing some of the funding need related to these items in budget. S. Anderson noted that in line with past F&B requests, every expenditure or budget request should be accompanied by an executive summary as proposed earlier by M. Banks from the town, agency or board representative before debate or a vote is allowed in the RTM. Committee generally discussed this topic. M. Banks noted it had been brought up to Rules Committee. J. Palen stated he would bring the topic to Rules Committee again. The Rules Committee must adopt the policy and communicate it to those who propose items for RTM approval.

T. Duffy noted that capital budget increases in 5-year plan took significant jumps in future years without any explanation on basis for jump. J. Palen noted debt service accounted for significant savings in future year but may be attributable to refinance accounting. Committee generally discussed lack of detail behind elements of 5-year plan. J. Palen to request additional detail.

R. Cardone brought up increased enrollment projections on school, impact on budget and basis for projections. R. Cardone also mentioned article in Darien Times and max density of new housing at Heights area versus actual occupancy based on enrolled students. Committee generally discussed enrollment projections and new developments at Kensett and Heights area. J Palen to ask for updates on enrollment projections, including update on Avalon.

S. Anderson noted that the increase in usage fees charged for town services such as the dump and beaches does not increase in line with cost increases for these services leading to widening gap between the two that should be addressed. Committee discussed usage fees general and J. Palen noted as another topic he will pass on.

S. Anderson also noted that he thought approach committee should take is to pass on top 10 expense areas on budgets for Board of Selectman/Board of Education/Board of Finance to focus on. Mentioned insurance services as one example of area for improvement with question as to whether self-insurance in conjunction with the Board of Education employees would reduce costs by eliminating the underwriters' profit.

R. Cardone mentioned that update should also be requested on previous questions regarding town-wide IT coordinator.

J. Palen noted that it was important to get all concerns in front of relevant boards as soon as possible rather than April so enough time is available to address/action concerns.

A motion to call the meeting to an end was made by J. Palen and agreed to by all at 8:20 pm.