

**Board of Finance
Marlborough Senior Center
March 24, 2016
Special Meeting
7:00 P.M.**

Call to Order

Chairman Knowlton called the special meeting to order at 7:09 p.m. Seated were Doug Knowlton, Cliff Denniss, Ken Hjulstrom, Erik Young and Susan Leser. Alternate Midge Denno was seated for the vacancy.

Public Comments

Dick Shea, Bull Hill Road, Selectman but speaking as an individual, expressed his appreciation to the RHAM Board and Dr. Siminski. Mr. Shea feels the budget is reasonable but there are unanswered questions regarding the capital budget.

RHAM Board of Education Budget Presentation

Dr. Siminski presented a very detailed budget presentation and explained the goals and highlights in detail. He stated that there is a 4.2 decrease in positions from last year and that enrollment is down. The middle school teams are being reduced from 6 teams to 5. As of 7/1/2016, all employees will be in a HAS which reflects a cost savings.. The principals are the only employees left to go into a HSA. Dr. Siminski feels the program will be adequate at a .28% increase.

Rather than having a trooper at \$200,000/year, they are proposing a Hebron constable instead. This will be a full-time position where he/she will review the facility, train staff, will attend POST for certification/recertification. This position will also address traffic only on the RHAM campus.

Dr. Siminski explained that the need for books is decreasing as going online. AP courses require books. Publishers also provide electronic versions with textbooks. Only the administration will be in contract negotiations this fall. As far as technology, without Chromebooks with cloud memory, students will fall behind.

The fuel budget is lower due to the current economy. The board is considering switching to gas and will try to sell its oil commitment. The maintenance budget has increased due to the need for crack filling and paving. Sidewalks are being repaired as needed.

With regards to the school choice program, they are trying to have less students go to magnet schools. Special education tuition has increased due to the need to send students out of district/state which increases transportation costs. The board is trying to develop programs to eliminate the need to send students out of district/state.

Dr. Siminski noted that revenues will increase in the spring due to increased use of buildings (i.e. recitals). He also commented that he will be able to do a cost per pupil for special education for the public hearing.

Dr. Siminski is looking at and prioritizing health and safety and is presenting projects in priority order. Sidewalks, choral risers with handicap access and area of refuge are of priority. The state will reimburse 60% for the handicap access.

Ms. Traversa asked the average per pupil cost as it is not known what is included. She would like to see a breakdown of amounts. Dr. Siminski explained that the State Department of Education calculates the amount which he will get. Ms. Traversa also asked with regard to the decline over the years at RHAM, she would the count of certified and non-certified professionals.

Budget deliberations and continued review of proposed 2016/2017 Annual Budget, meet with selected offices, boards and commissions; and possible action.

Mr. Knowlton stated he would like to focus on the local BOE since there are changes to be made and they should be done early on. They can do the town operations later on. Mr. Denniss stated that doesn't want to finalize the BOE budget until the town operations is done. He doesn't want to lock in one in case there is a need to go back to change. Mr. Hjulstrom is looking at this like it is two different entities. Mr. Knowlton, Ms. Leser and Ms. Denno agreed that there should be open ended deliberations as to notify the BOE early.

Mr. Hjulstrom stated that the additional staff member at \$78,000 was not included in Dr. Sklarz's budget. He wants to know where the money will come from if they want the position. Ms. Leser commented that the board was divided on adding the position and suggested taking it out. Mr. Hjulstrom thinks it would be safe to reduce by \$78,000. Mr. Knowlton stated that he was bothered that the surplus was not returned to the town which affects the CNR ratio. He feels that if they don't want to return the surplus at the end of the year, then it should be taken off at the beginning of the year. Ms. Leser agreed. There were additional discussions regarding debt services numbers and the need to get the true expenditures out to the public and include them in the budget presentation. Decreased enrollment, CNR to budget ratios and the possible elimination of a trooper and the increase hours of a constable were also discussed. The consensus of the board is to reduce both budgets.

MOTION: Ms. Leser made a motion, seconded by Mr. Young, to reduce the Board of Education budget by \$200,000 to \$7,222,854.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Hjulstrom feels the amount is too high.

VOTE: All voted in favor, except for Mr. Hjulstrom who abstained.

Correspondence

There was discussion amongst the committee members regarding answers to questions raised about various budget items. Mr. Knowlton forwarded responses to members via email.

Acceptance of March 17 meeting minutes

Mr. Denniss asked that the commission hold off until the next regular meeting for the regular board clerk to correct the minutes. Mr. Knowlton asked that issues and/or corrections be sent to the BOF before the next meeting.

Public Comments

Bill Lardi, Vice-Chairman, WPCA, was thankful for the cuts as the sewer district is looking at major increases in O&M operations.

Amy Traversa, 21 Jones Hollow Road, expressed her thanks for the deliberations. Her point is if she is going to be held accountable for a final budget as First Selectman for the success or failure of a budget would appreciate having the final say where cuts will come from. The town operations budget did not include any inflated numbers. She made some suggestions to the BOF in an effort to be pro-active. She does not believe the BOF has a line item veto per the charter and encourages everyone to read the charter.

Evelyn Godbout, Selectman, recalls the BOF in the past gave one number to the town as opposed to line items. Mr. Knowlton suggested a charter revision to provide clarity.

Dick Shea, Bull Hill Road, speaking as an individual, the flexibility of the Board of Selectman to make adjustment where needed is most appreciated. He knows committee members are always looking over their shoulders regarding public response; therefore the committees need to work together as an entire team. The state will cut needed things and the education process will be critical. He asked for attendance at the RHAM public hearing on March 28, 2016.

Carol Shea, Bull Hill Road, RHAM Board member speaking as an individual, encourages attendance at the RHAM public hearing. The levy is increased and we need to make sure we're heard and that safety needs should be included in this budget. We need to make sure the focus is on needs not wants. Critical safety needs to be addressed.

Judy Benson Clark, RHAM Board member, stated the \$467,000 was for transparency and other board members have been making conflicting statements. \$85,500 was for the fire wall portion. She also concurs with Ms. Shea's statements.

Adjournment

Mr. Young made a motion, seconded by Susan Leser, to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 p.m. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Magro
Board Clerk