

TOWN OF NORTH BROOKFIELD

Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee

Monday, June 8, 2015

The North Brookfield Board of Selectmen met with the North Brookfield Finance Committee on Monday, June 8, 2015, in the Police Department Meeting Room . Present were Selectmen Eric Hevy, Mary Walter, and Robert Smith. Finance Committee members present were Chet Lubelczyk, Chairman, Frank Hubacz, Robert Locatelli, Debby Maggio, and Sheila Orsi. The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 6:30 PM by Mr. Hevy. The Meeting of the Finance Committee was called to order by Mr. Lubelczyk at the same time.

The Selectmen reviewed the Minutes of the Meeting of Friday, June 5, 2015. A Motion was made by Ms. Walter, and seconded by Mr. Hevy, to approve the Minutes as presented. The vote was unanimous. The Minutes were approved. (Attachment)

Mr. Hevy provided members of the Finance Committee with various reports developed by the Selectmen regarding the FY 16 budget requests, and possible ways of reducing the projected deficit of \$424,655. These included a revised Income/Expense report and other materials related to the General Town Government portion of the overall budget. He also explained six options which had been discussed by the Selectmen at their meetings to reduce the deficit, but also make needed investments in several areas. It was noted that the increase in the projected deficit shown on the revised Income/Expense report was almost entirely the result of an increase in the Town's assessment for 'choice-out' students.

After a lengthy discussion, the Selectmen recommended level funding FY 16 General Town Government budgets, which would reduce the deficit to approximately \$292,992. However, the Selectmen also recommended the addition of an additional employee at the Highway Department, and minor additions to other budgets, totaling approximately \$41,634. This would result in a deficit of approximately \$344,626. No changes were recommended for either the Sewer or Water Department budgets, which are self-funding. Level funding was also recommended for the School Department.

The Selectmen noted that of the total recommended FY 16 budget of approximately \$14.3 million (before level funding) only approximately \$2.1 million (before level funding) represented the General Town Government portion of the overall budget, after debt and interest, employee benefits, the Bay Path assessment, veterans' benefits, and

Cherry Sheet charges to the Town were subtracted. These accounts could not be subject to level funding. It was also noted that any additional attempt to reduce the deficit through across the board reductions to level funded budgets would yield very little (a 4% reduction would result in approximately \$30,000 in savings). But any such reductions to non-salary accounts would leave many Departments without the resources to function.

The Selectmen agreed with the Finance Committee that planning for the FY 17 budget should begin immediately, with discussions over the summer months. Every aspect of Town Government would have to be reviewed, and proposals developed to reduce costs, which could lead to consolidation of Departments or in some cases regionalization of some functions.

The FY 16 budget would be balanced at the November Town Meeting utilizing available funds from the sale of tax-title properties over the summer, and 'free cash' available to the Town. It was emphasized that the Selectmen do not envision use of Stabilization funds to balance the budget at this time. If available funds from all sources are not adequate to balance the budget in the Fall, very serious reductions to budgets may be necessary, all of which will affect services in FY 16.

The Selectmen also advised the Finance Committee of their intention to undertake a detailed study of the Town's 'choice-out' assessments and the numbers of students classified as 'choice-out' from FY 13 through the projected assessment for FY 16. This study will help to clarify why the Town's assessment continues to rise even as 12th grade students on 'choice-out' graduate each year.

That concluded the discussion with the Finance Committee. (Attachments)

At the close of their Meeting, the Selectmen reviewed a transfer request from the Town Clerk for the transfer of \$73.00 from the Elections and Census Salary Account to the Elections and Census Other Expenses account. After discussion, a Motion was made by Ms. Walter, and seconded by Mr. Smith, to approve the transfer. The vote was unanimous. The transfer was approved.

There being no further business before the Board of Selectmen, a Motion was made by Ms. Walter, and seconded by Mr. Smith, to adjourn the Meeting. The vote was unanimous. The Meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Smith