

## **Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes**

55 School Street

October 26, 2015

7:00 PM

Attendees: State Senator Anne Gobi and District Director Tyler Wolanin  
State Representative Donnie Berthiaume  
Board of Selectmen: Eric Hevy, Mary Walter  
Finance Committee: Sheila Orsi, Deb Maggio, Chet Lubelczk, Peter Dupell  
North Brookfield Schools: Superintendent Marilyn Tencza  
School Committee: Michael Kiska, Meg Cloutier  
Public: James Metcalf, Charles Marshall

1. Called Meeting to Order: 7PM by Chairman Eric Hevy
2. Welcome to Senator Gobi and Representative Berthiaume by Chairman Hevy
3. Introductions: Chairman Hevy had participants introduce themselves and whom they represented and their purpose at the meeting.
4. Opening Statements were made by Chairman Hevy, Senator Gobi and Representative Berthiaume emphasizing the importance of solving the issues with the Chapter 70 formula from each of their perspectives.
5. Discussion: Chapter 70 Questions and Choice Out questions.

Chairman Hevy then proceeded to lead discussion of questions that he had and those that had been submitted by meeting participants.

Senator Gobi responded to all questions in the context of giving a detailed history of the State Regulations and their enforcement through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. She supported the efforts of the Communities in her district as a State Representative at the time who joined forces to request a forum type meeting similar to this one to hear the issues of the various Communities to better understand the impact of both the Chapter 70 formula and School Choice on municipal budgets, particularly in smaller communities.

She referenced the existence of a draft report published in June from the Foundation Budget Review Commission and indicated that Commission's report was expected to be completed in the very near future. The Senator responded to all questions clarifying confusion and misunderstanding where it existed among the participants.

### Chapter 70 Questions:

1. As you are aware, there is a study in progress for evaluating the Chapter 70 funding formula. Could you please provide your insight on how this may affect North Brookfield? Either positively or negatively, and do you think it will change and what the time frame may be on the changes?

2. I would like to know if anyone is aware of the burden that CH 70 has put on the Town budget due to the non-cap of the 2 1/2% rate that CH 70 has and what is being done to reduce the gap?

3. In more direct terms, towns are capped at charging only 2 1/2% increased tax rate to its residents without the town voting to increase the 2 1/2% with an override vote yet the CH 70 initiative can mandate certain charges to the school/town that can be well OVER the 2 1/2% tax rate increase leaving the towns to make up the difference to school and this has created a gouge in the town fiscal budget that can only be rectified if the town residents increase the tax rate, which rarely happens because it is difficult to educate the town residents to vote FOR an override which creates less funding to the town departments

4. It would be beneficial to the survival of the town budget if the state mandates the CH 70 funds;

1. To fund the mandate themselves or

2. To allow the town to increase rate to the residents for the mandated school funding WITHOUT needing a 2 1/2% override or

3. Mandate that the state can only increase any CH 70 mandates to a town by the same standard of 2 1/2 % increase per year.

5. Any other questions from the group about Chapter 70?

#### School Choice Questions:

1. What was the original intent and objective of this program?

2. Why do we have school choice, if one's school is in good standing?

3. Are there any other states that have a school choice program? If so, how does it compare to the program in MA?

4. Who benefits from the double charge to the community? How can we change/opt out?

5. Why do the parents not pay, as they would with a private choice?

6. How many communities are adversely impacted by this program, and so, are hampered to improve due to lack of funds/staff?

7. Why is it believed that bigger is better and bigger is more efficient?

8. Would like to know why the cost to the town for non-vocational choice out students (i.e. Quabbin or Tantasqua) is capped at \$5,000/child but the cost for vocational students seems to be unlimited. We are currently paying almost \$50K for the education AND transportation of a student who wants to attend a vocational program not offered locally and there is a second student in town interested in attending a school in Northampton next year which could double that figure. Not sure if our elected officials are aware of this discrepancy and/or what can be done about it.

9. I am interested in doing an in depth study of our School Choice process and would like to eventually submit a bill with possible changes to the School Choice process. Would you and

Rep. Berthiaume support this and assist me with obtaining necessary documentation about School Choice?

10. Any other questions about School Choice?

Chairman Hevy thanked Senator Gobi and Representative Berthiaume and the Finance Committee and the School Superintendent and School Committee for their participation in the meeting.

At 8:45 PM Chairman Eric Hevy called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Walter moved and Mr. Smith seconded the motion. So voted

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Walter