

March 23, 2023 Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

Finance Committee in Attendance: Peter Roach, Susan Lorenz, Rachel Dingus, Robert Rendeon, Kevin Perry, Jacob Stebbins, and David Carpenter

Board of Selectmen in Attendance: Leonard Hull, Ken Pacheco, and Peter Caron

Town Administrator: Michael Mullins

Town Accountant: Sirena Amaral

- I. Dighton Rehoboth Regional School District – Bill Rooney – new superintendent, and Robert Baxter, and Chris Andrade, all presenting DR Budget for FY2024
 - a. Budget Overview – numerous factors contributed to Budget Bubble (3.2M expense increase vs \$1.3M revenues)
 - i. Inflation
 - ii. Audit Corrective Actions
 - iii. Teacher and Staff Salary obligations
 - iv. Transportation increases
 - v. Facilities services – utilities, energy and technology
 - vi. Insurance increases
 - vii. Postponed expenses – IT and Professional development
 - b. Loss of enrollment for HS down by 33% (lost 80 students)
 - i. ES / MS 90% retention
 - ii. HS – 59% retention
 - c. Numerous cuts to services and infrastructure
 - i. Cuts to teaching positions
 - ii. Cuts to security infrastructure
 - iii. Reductions to music
 - d. Questions:
 - i. Energy cost status – solar arrays – 100% functional
 - ii. Electric, natural gas, oil – costs all increased – renewing energy contract now, but much higher costs, front loaded contracts are going to provide positive cash flow
 - iii. What was energy increase at DR? no exact numbers provided... will provide numbers
 - iv. Solar array contract – price locked in for 3 years
 - v. CTE program – if lower enrollment, should funds be reallocated? Current round of cuts is trying to maximize eligibility for CH 70 funding.
 - vi. \$220,000 in School choice (tuition out – 44 students) vs \$150,000 tuition in (30 students).
 - vii. Size of Attleboro (comparing to BP school district and DR) students and budgets for comparing per-student costs. Looking at declining enrollments in High School to discuss potential options to improve enrollment outcomes. Discussions around re-allocating classes to different schools (4th grade to middle school and 8th grade to high school.

RECEIVED

Town Clerk-Dighton, MA

MAY 04 2023

Time: 8:20am

By: 

March 23, 2023 Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

- viii. \$1.5 million increase to MS / ES – explanations for increases – Peter Roache requested multi-year comparison for DR
 - ix. Special Education costs – where located in budget
 - x. IRS issue – 2016 & 2017 1095C forms provided to employees, but not transmitted to IRS – penalties assessed per year per student, 50% abated (2016), looking for 2017 abatement.
 - xi. Fiscal year 2022 end of year audit complete but results not sent back yet, Fiscal 2023 on track to be timely started.
 - xii. 10 members of school committee.
 - xiii. Concerns raised about Rehoboth School budget due to BP and Bristol Aggie Assessments possibly affecting Dighton school budget in terms of budget cuts.
- II. Police Department:
- a. Lieutenant not being replaced at this point
 - b. Resource Officer
 - c. Question about New Additions (Harbormaster and Assistant) tabled by BOS
 - d. Firearms educational requirements increase.
 - e. Professional & Technical – gas & Diesel, Other supplies.
 - f. Overtime
- III. Communications:
- a. RMS Software – looking to upgrade – current software from 2007
 - b. New Traffic Control chair - \$4,000 per chair, current chair out of warranty, but not eligible for grant (need 5 year period – currently only 4 years).
 - c. Chief needs to verify acct 5105 number
- IV. Animal Control:
- a. Animal Health & Welfare – increase to associated costs
 - b. Neutering costs offset by adoption fees
 - c. Professional & Technical – Conference costs for Animal Control Officer, annual certification courses.
 - d. Travel – incorporated into Professional & Tech.
- V. Fire Department:
- a. Gas & Diesel – costs at max budget already
 - b. Equipment – due to supply chain issues – must buy when you can get it. Asked about joining with other towns to improve order size and priority with vendors – logistics are unwieldy, particularly with perishable items
 - c. Fuel – no good answer – fuel prices extremely volatile, and auto fuel is a need, hostage to pricing fluctuations.
 - d. Building Supplies
- VI. Ambulance:
- a. Collections – on track, but write-offs still need to processed – fire chief addressing.
- VII. Emergency Preparedness:
- a. Budget reductions from putting this department under fire department prevue.
 - b. Communication – Code Red system – can be absorbed by present budget.

March 23, 2023 Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

- VIII. Planning Board:
 - a. 8% stipend – where did number come from – 8.7% stipend COL adjustment approved by state. Robert Woods stated 2% would be an amenable amount.
 - b. Professional & Technical – consists of legal fees – appeals. Per Michael Mullins, he believes that \$15,000 will not be sufficient to address level of appeals – he will update before warrant articles set.
- IX. Board of Appeals – under budget,
 - a. but stipends amount inadvertently omitted – town administrator to correct.
 - b. Professional & Technical – appeals and legal opinions and IT repairs – this number \$10,000 may be insufficient to cover costs.
- X. Parks & Recreation:
 - a. Trying to increase recreational activities to add programs – may put up warrant article for inclusion for Special Town meeting for revolving funds account?
 - b. Bathroom Services – price going up – may introduce fees to offset some of these increased costs.
 - c. Shed at Tennis courts – needs repairs and maintenance.
- XI. Trails Committee
- XII. Public Library:
 - a. Library Hours discussed
 - b. Revenues numbers – only for public library
 - c. Staffing questions
 - d. Anticipatory Date for moving in to new quarters – end of calendar yr 2024. – additional year Fiscal 2025 trailer rental.
 - e. Books and magazines – budget amount required by state based on population.
 - f. De-certification consequences discussed.
 - g. Electronic assets utilization discussed.
 - h. Other costs tied to certification? Library currently in compliance.
 - i. 5350 Recreation line – costs for speakers, other programs, and supplies to support those programs.
 - j. Grant funding question from Leonard Hull – where is grant money received on budget line – grants in special revenues line located on page one of budget overview.
- XIII. Town Accountant:
 - a. Continuing Education / Professional Development
- XIV. Data Processing :
 - a. Fire Dept Software fees
 - b. Building permit software
 - c. Collector Computer software
 - d. COA / Prime Time User Fees – line item \$1,800 is correct.
- XV. Benefits – Tuition:
 - a. College Tuition benefits only – not for dept. certifications
 - b. College course must be related to job duties