

TOWN OF PROVINCETOWN - BOARD OF SELECTMEN

SPECIAL MEETING - WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2008

JUDGE WELSH HEARING ROOM

The Board of Selectmen joined the FinCom Meeting at 4:00 PM. Board of Selectmen attending: Mary-Jo Avellar, Michele Couture, Austin Knight, Pam Parmakian, Lynne Davies

Other attendees: Town Manager Sharon Lynn, Asst. Town Manager David Gardner, Municipal Finance Director Alix Heilala

The following are meeting minutes as recorded by the Finance Committee:

The Finance Committee was joined by the Board of Selectmen, the School Committee, the Superintendent of School, other School officials, and a large public audience for a joint hearing on the Schools' budget.

Ms. Waugh gave a brief summary of the budget which had been approved by the School Committee the previous evening. The initial draft budget prepared in December proposed a roughly \$300K increase over the current year. Given the fiscal situation of the Town, the Superintendent and the School Committee were able to pare that down, and are now proposing a level funded budget of \$3,647,904.88 which is \$4,434.99 lower (-.12%) than the current year.

After some discussion, it was agreed by all that there would review the school budget department by department, focusing on those items that had the biggest change – plus or minus.

School Committee - Presented by Superintendent Jessica Waugh & the Administrative Assistant for Business & Finance, Betty White.

The proposed School Committee budget (\$18,410) has been reduced by \$3,300 (15.2%)

Line item School Committee Contracted Services reflects a \$4,000 decrease in liability insurance.

Line item School Committee Advertising has been increased by \$1,200 from \$3,800 to \$5,000. This covers advertising for teacher positions, legal notices, public hearing notices, etc. This line item has been consistently overrun in previous years. The actual year-to-date amount spent as of 1/16/08 is \$5,800.

Superintendent's Office - Presented by Superintendent Jessica Waugh & the Administrative Assistant for Business & Finance, Betty White.

The proposed Superintendent's Office budget has been reduced by \$845.44 (0.34%).

Two items in the Superintendent's budget sparked vigorous discussion. First, the Superintendent's salary was cut by 20% (\$19,000). Second, the salaries of the two Administrative Assistants were increased by slightly over \$12,000 each.

Ms. Waugh explained that the cut in her salary was voluntary and permanent. She proposed the cut to demonstrate her commitment to the schools. Members of the School Committee confirmed that Ms. Waugh had made this cut voluntarily, despite their own objections.

Regarding the second issue, Ms. Waugh and Ms. White provided the following explanation:

- Due to consolidation of positions, responsibilities of the two positions have expanded greatly.
- The job descriptions have been re-written to reflect the new responsibilities.
- Two step increases have been added at 7% each.
- Annual increases also include 3% cost of living adjustments and longevity.
- The amounts in the budget reflect the second year of a three year contract.
- The increases for the first year of the new contract are not reflected in the current year (FY08) budget, making the yearly increase look larger than it really is.

The concerns raised by members of the Finance Committee, and the Board of Selectmen can be summarized as follows:

1. The cut in the Superintendent's salary, even if voluntary, could set a bad precedent going forward when the time comes to hire a new Superintendent.
2. Even if justified, the increases in the Administrative Assistants salaries during a period of budget constraint send the wrong message to other Town employees who are facing potential job cuts and the prospect of getting no raises at all.
3. The two taken together create the appearance that the budget has been balanced artificially.

Veterans Memorial Elementary School - Presented by Superintendent Jessica Waugh & the Administrative Assistant for Business & Finance, Betty White

The proposed FY09 VMES budget (\$1,221,134.16) is \$85,536.06 representing (7.53%) higher than this year. Enrollment as of October 1, 2007 was 96 students including 20 School Choice students.

Many of the Committee's questions related to increases in salary lines. Most of those are per union contracts with a few exceptions noted below.

- Part-time teaching specialist salaries increased by \$29,956.53 (119.04%). This was described as a positive educational move by the Superintendent.
- Compensation for the part-time librarian increased by \$8,389.05 (43.13%) because the librarian has taken on the additional responsibility of teaching technology classes for Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 6 students.
- The nurse is now full-time for VMES only; a second nurse covers PHS under a matching grant program. Prior to this change the nurse's salary was split between the VMES and PHS budgets.

Other items of note that were discussed:

- Pupil transportation costs are covered by School Choice income and thus show as \$0 in the budget.
- Heating costs have risen by \$14,000 (21.28%). No surprise there.
- The school pays \$4,000 for maintenance of its 58 phone lines. When the Town replaces its system, the schools should share the same system to reduce costs.

Due to the regular Board of Selectmen's meeting scheduled to start at 6:00 pm, the meeting adjourned at 5:55 pm. The three boards agreed to continue their joint hearing at 2:00 pm on March 5th.

Minutes submitted for posting by: Vernon G. Porter, Secretary to Board of Selectmen
April 30, 2008