

Minutes of the Tri-Board Meeting of the Town of Suffield
Dec. 16, 2014 - Senior Center - 7 p.m.

Members present:

Board of Finance (BoF): Justin Donnelly, Joe Sangiovanni, Ryan Anderson, Chris Childs, Brian Kost, alts. Tracy Eccles, Eric Harrington, J. Michael Stevens Absent: Scott Lingenfelter

Board of Selectmen (BoS): Ed McAnaney, Tim Reynolds, Brian Fitzgerald, Mel Chafetz Absent: Joanne Sullivan

Board of Education (BoE): Jeanne Gee, Michele Zawaki, Lori D'Ostuni, Natalie Nadoloney
Absent: George Beiter

Also present: Director of Finance Deborah Cerrato, BoE Business Manager Bill Hoff

Chairman Justin Donnelly called to meeting to order at 7 p.m. Mr. Donnelly noted that the Town Charter (Sect. 803.2) permits the Chairman of the Board of Finance to call a Tri-Board meeting once a year and he has done that every year since he became Chairman. We welcome Mr. Hoff, the new Business Manager of the Board of Education.

Level of Engagement with the BoE Budget - He wants to address transparency and understanding as we approach the budget season. For an example, at the Town Budget Public Hearing of April 30, 2014, a question was asked; what is the fiscal impact of creating three new administrative positions doing away with three teachers' position. The Chairman of the BoE stated that it was to be less than \$10,000 in total. At the December 2, 2014 meeting, the departing Superintendent of the BoE, noted that the cost difference was between \$58,000 - \$72,000 more for those administrative positions. This is just a total lack of communication of what the true cost was. I hope we do not have this issue again; that is part of why we have the Tri-Board meeting.

Mr. Kost stated he hoped that this year, the Board of Education supply copies of the BoE budget for residents at the public hearing and Town Meeting.

Jeanne Gee, Acting Board Chairman, Board of Education, noted that the Board had 13 candidates to replace the 4 board members that resigned and when we left the meeting, we had 14 candidates. We did accept the formal resignations of 4 BoE members, that being done, we have a 30 day window to act and appoint new BoE members. The board is going to interview all of the candidates and hope every one will be interviewed by January 2. She stated that the entire board of 9 will act as budget committee to compile the 2015-16 budget. The budget meetings will be part of the regular meeting and the visitors will not be able to participate. For some issues maybe there will be a workshop before the meeting.

Mr. Anderson noted that he and Mr. Kost will represent the Board of Finance and they will attend the meetings. Mr. Kost noted that the lower price of energy should not be a reason to spend the difference on other things.

Capital Needs for FY 15-16 - Mr. Donnelly asked the BoE if they will have major capitol needs to bring before ACCE. At this time, the BoE has no major new ACCE projects to propose. A ten year plan was presented last year.

Mr. Sangiovanni stated that now we have the Library Project underway, we need to go back and address the renovation of the Town Hall. We need to replenish the Fund; money was transferred from the Town Hall Renovation line item to the KML Library Project. Most of the plans for the Town Hall have been decided; but the hold up is that we must move the Information Technology IT server room to another location. It is currently located right in the middle on the second floor.

Mr. McAnaney stated that he does not anticipate much of a change in the Selectman's budget other than requirements by the new contracts. We expect to live in the previous constructs and expect to see the Debt Service decline. I expect to see a flat budget.

Mr. Childs noted that there is the very important option to bond for funding to continue the needed road repairs. The rate is most favorable now.

Scorecard & Metrics – Mr. Anderson stated we need to have better understanding of the fixed and variable cost within the BoE budget and also looking at the enrollment count. We need to look at all of these factors before the budget process begins. This could act as a template, a framework. The BoF has started a draft, and then will consult with the BoE for needed information. Mr. Harrington, Mr. Kost and Mr. Anderson will act for the BoF on this issue. Mr. Chafetz indicated that this should be done for the town budget also.

Bridge Street School options – It is noted that the subcommittee has not reported to the Board of Finance. It is expected to come before the BoF with business plans and plans for the use of the building at the next meeting. Does the Town want a community center? Are we meeting the needs of the Town? Are we trying to save the building or build a community center? Much discussion followed.

Town Capital Plans - There is talk about developing Fflyer Place; which might entail moving the Town Garage, the salt shed, and the dog pound. The road would have to be brought up to Town road standards. Would possible tax revenue pay for the relocation of the Highway garage? Would the developer buy the land on which the Highway Department stands? Does the Town want commercial development on Fflyer Road? What would be a return on our investment? Much discussion followed. We have a grant from the State to extend the expansion of utilities down Rt. 75; this project needs more funding and we should address this need.

Percentage increase per Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) – CPI
The BoF has a policy that increases to the new budget not exceed the CPI, as of tonight, 1.7% . The Town has the issue of the 53rd week of the payroll; this does not affect the BoE. This increase would then be 2% just alone. It seems that the target should be 2-3% increase. It is noted that the undesignated fund again will be high; maybe 20%. The problem is unexpended budget funds which continue to fund the undesignated fund balance. We perhaps should use more of this funding and reduce the percentage of undesignated fund balance. The Town relies on the preliminary state budget figures for the grants that are received.

The State gives figures that can not be counted upon to be accurate. We have to use the State numbers as projected. The state information when dispersed to the Town, says clearly that the numbers should not be used for budget purposes. We should look at the past years history of state aid and see what the pattern is.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.
Respectfully submitted, Bobbie C. Kling, Secretary

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