

Town of Brunswick, Maine

Finance Committee Meeting

Wednesday, May 13, 2015

3:30 – 5:00 PM

85 Union Street – Conference room #206

Meeting Minutes (Approved 6/18/15)

Committee Members: Sarah Brayman, Jane Millet, John Richardson

Staff: Julie Henze, John Eldridge

Others: Richard Fisco

1. Acknowledgement that Meeting was Properly Noticed

JH confirmed that the meeting was on the Town Calendar

2. Committee received the 5/6/15 Minutes; postponed discussion and approval to next meeting

3. Adjustments to agenda / Public comment

Switch items 4 and 5 – begin with selected exhibits for the 2015-16 Budget.

Public comments – later in meeting.

5. 2015-16 Budget – Selected exhibits

a. *Municipal expenditure charts–*

i. Chart detailing 5 year trends in each of 9 categories of municipal expenditures. Discussion of what each category includes. Chart shows that salaries/benefits and contractual services make up the bulk of the expenditures, and have seen the largest increases over the past 5 years.

ii. **item 4b.** – 10 year graph of budgeted salaries and benefits, going from \$9.3M in 2005-06, to \$12.3M estimated in 2015-16 – 32% more.

b. *School Dept budget charts –*

i. **item 4a.** – 10 year graph of changes in state aid to education. This chart breaks out debt service from operating subsidy. Operating subsidy going from a high of \$13.2M in 2007-08 to an estimated \$8.5M in 2015-16.

ii. 10 year graph of number of subsidizable pupils – decrease from 3,158 in 2004, to 2,384 in 2014.

iii. 10 year graph of operating subsidy per pupil – relatively flat, with a high of \$4,308 in 2008-09, and \$3,559 estimated for 2015-16

Budget Process Discussion

- JE – after 5/14 public hearing, or at 5/18 Council meeting, needs an idea of where to land. School dept budget has shifted later by 2 weeks – formerly was delivered before April vacation, and used to have 2 public hearings.
- JR – appreciates school suggestion to collaborate; possible to get municipal side worked through before school budget is available, set it aside and look at school budget.
- JE – has been asking for school-municipal cooperation for years. Municipal budget is a small portion, making a tax rate prediction difficult.
- SB – how do we get from here to budget adoption? More communication is good, but all are competing for scarce resources.

- JM – doesn't like the "dog & pony" shows – just wants the numbers and the opportunity to ask specific questions.
- JE – recently the focus has been on the big picture – telling the story of increased services/programs with less federal & state support
- JR – discussion of process for next year – would rather see a summary by the manager – 1 page memo on each dept, then can ask questions of dept head.
- SB – likes the "dog & pony" shows – good opportunity for public to hear what depts do. Would like a post mortem on the budget process after 2015-16 budget is done.
- JE – attempted to communicate the primary drivers – maybe could have presented this better. Would be easier if the school and municipal budgets were in a more similar format. Would like more guidance on where any additional cuts should come from – guidance on priorities.
- JR – Feels a starting point should be 1.7% tax rate increase, and need justification to go higher. 5% not sustainable. Thinking that probably will want to "trim sails", will want to do something for the school buildings. Also concerned about potential abatement requests.
- JE – currently budget has flat valuation – recently talked with Cathy, increases possible but may be offset by abatements.
- Look at **item 4c**. – abatement appeals list; question about MRRRA status; per JE very close to a decision and close to goal

- JM – does not want to sacrifice quality of programs for better buildings.
- JR – feels it will be important to adopt a budget as a unanimous Council – builds credibility
- JE – regarding school buildings, understands that the school dept is going for Nov 2015, an off year. Will they be ready??
- SB – in the budget process wants to be sure that someone advocates for municipal services – this is a Town Council responsibility.
- JR – the school dept is driving the process as that is the biggest part of the budget

- Note that JR and Dan Harris will not be at the 5/18/15 budget meeting.

Public Comment

Rev. Fisco spoke – State withdrawing funds, but local control can be better. Users of education are best suited to make decisions on how resources are used. Town Council is doing a great job.

Meeting adjourned.

4. Outstanding items – follow-up from previous meeting

Other than items 4a, 4b, and 4c discussed within item 5, others not discussed.

5. Suggestion to record Finance Committee meetings

Not discussed.

Follow-up items - remaining left over from 5/6/15 meeting, not reviewed again on 5/13/15.

1. Complete a salary survey – not urgent
2. Revenue ordinance – complete by summer