



Town of Fairhaven

Town Hall - 40 Centre Street - Fairhaven, MA 02719

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MEETING NOTES

FAIRHAVEN,
MASS.

Date, Time, Location:

February 25th @ 7:00 P.M., Remote through ZOOM

Meeting Overview:

1. Meeting called to order
2. Past meeting minutes approval
3. Overview of School Department budget and capital project requests
4. Overview of Town Finance Department budget and capital project requests
 - a. Includes Town accountant office
 - b. Includes Treasure and Collectors office
 - c. Includes Assessor's office
5. Closing Remarks
 - a. Notes on Open Meeting Law and the Town Administrator process
6. Vote to adjourn

-Key-

BOLD = Issue being discussed

● = Notes, indentation for more notes

○ = Questions and discussions below

◇ = Votes (Nom/Second)

! = Change in attendance

Member Attendance (11):

- Padraic Elliot, Lisa Plante, Chris Fidalgo, Bernie Roderick, Carolyn Roberts, Tracey Diggins, Jessica Dwelley, Jennifer Dupras, Rob Grinrod, Kevin Gallagher (appeared late), Kathi Carter (appeared late)

Town of Fairhaven (7):

- Wendy Graves (Collector/Treasurer/Finance Director), Anne Carreiro (Town accountant), Dr. Robert Baldwin (Superintendent), Brian Monroe (School Committee), Nicole Potter (Department of IT), Kyle Bueno (School Committee), Del Garcia (Assessor's office)

Meeting called, 7:01 PM

PAST MINUTES

- Finance Committee 2.18.2021

- Date updated
- Count of guests updates

◆ Lisa, Carolyn, (9 - 0 unanimous, 1 Abstain)

TONIGHT'S AGENDA

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

- Took enrollment from 19-20, figured out class size goals, and budget from there (supplies)
- Focused on K-2 literacy, 3-6 Math
- Looks hopefully for next year to be a more normal year
- Regulations change frequently (every 2 weeks)
- Should we be extending the school year? Assessment needed
- Additional insight wanted for families, children, parents affected
- Nutritional assessment
- Increase of 5% over 2 years
- Rob: How many students do we have?
 - Baldwin: About 2000, down 89 students this year, which is typical with the commonwealth
- Rob: What's the trend for the student population?
 - Baldwin: Enrollment appeared to go down
 - However, it's stayed the same or increase
 - Elementary has stayed the same or increase, despite birth records
 - Home sales
 - Acushnet students choosing Fairhaven High instead
- Carolyn: Homeless students transportation, are funds available?
 - Baldwin: Funds goes directly to the town
- *Dr. Baldwin covers the budget*
- Transportation services up
 - Being looked at by the state, only 1 vendor
- Textbooks have gone down, while instructional technology has gone up
- Athletics uniform cycle continuing (had been skipped), also buying paint
- Requests come from the bottom up, teachers informing principles, who informs the Mrs. Kohler & Mrs. Potter
- Maintenance always useful
- Trying to lower overhead through solar, but requires utilities to take action
- Pad: Is this a level service budget? Baldwin: Yes, accurate
- Pad: Last year was aided by CARES money, 400k? Baldwin: Yes, but that was to offset the reduction
- PPE and additional requirements due to the pandemic
- Pad: Any federal money coming down? Baldwin: Yes, looking for that money, but we have to be careful with 1-time money, need to be aware of how populations change (kids coming back), need to keep at pace
- Pad: Any idea when the money might be available? Baldwin: 2 grant programs, one for PPE, another for social/emotional health and wellbeing

! Kevin Gallagher joined

- Baldwin: More money could be in July, or from Federal level
- Carolyn: School business manager, new position? Baldwin: School committee asked for this position, filled by Mrs. Potter, but Director of Technology was combined
- Brian Monroe: Last business manager left a few years ago, Potter worked for director of finance and technology, made sense to restore the title since comparable communities have this role, and she fit the role and responsibilities already
- Lisa: I thought we had 2 superintendents for the financial responsibility? Baldwin: Yes, that was town meeting a number of years ago, and when the last director left, that was replaced with an assistant superintendent
 - Monroe: No full time employment has been added
- Pad: Department of revenue, schools, expected to make less in revenue, why? Baldwin: Less people graduating
- Baldwin: Proposed reduction from TA was based on that revenue; if revenues increase, will it be put back into schools? Wendy: If we get additional revenues, then we'd look at putting the money back, school being one of them
- Pad: What's the impact of the reduction? Baldwin: A reduction of \$400k means...
 - 1) We wait to see for additional money (grants, federal, etc.)
 - 2) We get more revenue
- Pad: We're dipping into free cash once again, which is a concern
- Baldwin: We (school) have a good relationship with the town, and will do our best to give the best information to the FinCom, and hopefully positive news
 - Will deliver the impact of the decrease
- Carolyn: Were the Patriots grant for the turf available? Baldwin: Unfortunately didn't pan out, because of the project funding sources
- Kevin: Police and fire were told public safety would be a priority, but we cannot prioritize every department if revenues increase
 - Baldwin: When everyone got an initial cut, it seemed fair, but the school got a deeper cut due to Acushnet revenues went down (or so I was told)
- Kevin: How is the school staff doing? Baldwin: Doing well, but this is a difficult year with many challenges, and there's real costs to the other side of this pandemic
 - Pam Kuechler: The focus is on level services, but it's going to be really critical to focus on those different outcomes going forward
- Pad: Wendy, can you explain the school department's additional cuts? Wendy: They were cut 200k last year, but when rechecking the revenues, the school's Acushnet revenues went down 200k, which is where the additional cut came from
- Monroe: From the school committee's perspective, we understand that revenues are down, but we feel as though we didn't get the same treatment when business was doing well
- Carolyn: Acushnet revenue was down, shouldn't that reduce expenses? Baldwin: We cannot remove a teacher
- Anne Carreiro: The town is trying its best to make this work, including looking at other special revenue funds or revolving funds that could be used
- Baldwin: There's a maintenance capital project desired, but it's at the bottom of the list

TOWN

- Town accountant to start
 - Level funded, except seminars and gathers were cut (increases were for steps in salaries)
 - Carreiro: Accounting seminars, annual meetings, including certifications which are required for town accounting, along with self-study courses for CPA license
 - Carolyn: Sometimes you can get a lower price by waiting
 - Carolyn: I haven't heard of any in-person. Anne: All zoom this year
 - Carolyn: I heard you mention a hotel? Anne: Yes, because this is for FY22
- Treasure and collectors next
 - Down 12k due to retirement, hired people are at lower levels
 - Supplies were cut \$1000, mostly paper & toner
 - Preprinted forms also down
 - Tax title cut of \$11k
 - Rob: What administrative expense goes into contracted services? Wendy: Fees on the borrowings, an administrative fee, along with Harper's payroll
- Assessor's office
 - Salaries up due to step increases
 - Purchase of services up due to contract service, module that goes along with the building department
 - Del Garcia: DoR sent out that they are looking for cities and towns to look for assessed evaluation for gas and utilities, which has an appraisal cost
 - Were using a book, but this would increase to full value
 - Assessor's department is going through software updates for processing statistical values for the town, helps with the tax base
 - Small cuts to office supplies
 - Up due mostly due to the building permit software that needs to talk to the assessor
 - Garcia: When the permits come in, they are uploaded by hand, around 1,300 - 1,500 permits per year; this system will talk to the building department software, which will speed up the process
 - Pad: Can that lead to administrative staff layoffs, if we're lowering operating costs? Wendy: The administrator took on those tasks as extra work

CLOSING REMARKS

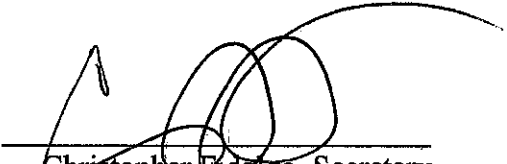
- Wendy: No word from Tree Warden or Lighting
- Pad: IT is up 6%, why?
- BPW next week, and there's several budgets involved
- Capital budget will be at selectmen's meeting next week
- Pad: Before, we had 0%, 2%, 4% budgets previously, where as Mark seemed to be more surgical, which can cause feelings of inequality between departments
- Pad: Are the cuts for Police and Fire what they offered? Wendy: Asked departments to do 5%, 10%, 15% cuts, which was used to make cuts; school only has 2 line items

- Pad: Overall government is down 8.8%, but several departments are up, mostly due to contractual salary increases
- Overall budget is up 2.8%, but certain departments are up quite a bit more
- For the most part, last year was level services, with some use of Free Cash to balance the budget
- Carreiro: We'll be looking at special revenue funds for the school department
- Pad: Happy that people are looking for more funds when possible
- Rob: Can we go back and look at last year's capital projects that were approved and defer some of those until we have a better picture of the coming months? Carreiro: When the money is appropriated, it cannot be removed from appropriation without a Town Meeting vote
- Rob: Can we look into making a recommendation at FinCom rather than removing the appropriation of money? Pad: It's a good question
- Rob: What hasn't had work done? Carreiro: Need clarity of what the intent is
 - Rob: Hold the money that hasn't been spent yet and make a suggestion about re-appropriating the money. Carreiro: Can check tomorrow, but requires investigation what contracts have been made
- Kevin: Probably should talk to town moderator
- Chris: Probably should talk to town counsel
- Lisa: It seems complicated that school is worried about the \$400k while they had the approval of \$1.2m last year.
 - Carolyn: Why was the Patriot's grant not followed up?
- Wendy: I tried to maintain all positions, since there's costs to layoffs as well
- Wendy: Other towns are using more reserve, after speaking with the listserve
- Carreiro: Waiting for meals and hotel tax to come back up
- Wendy: Assessments were also up, like school's choice
- March 26 is the last day to take votes

Regarding Open Meeting Law & TA Process

- Pad: Regarding Open Meeting law, so if we want to discuss something, it needs to be added 48 hrs ahead of time
- Duty of FinCom is to investigate the warrant and how it affects town finances
- Bernie's duty as a member isn't tied to the Finance Committee
- Kevin's duty for capital projects is tied to the Finance Committee

◆ Motion to adjourn, Chris, Lisa (9 - 0, unanimous), 8:25 PM



 Christopher Fidalgo, Secretary