



Town of Topsfield Finance Committee

Final Meeting Notes

March 2, 2020

7:00 P.M.

Topsfield Town Hall

- I. **Call to Order.** Chairman Jon Guido called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. with members Mike Hartmann, Eric Menzer, Karen Dow, Che Elwell and Lou Ross present. Also present were Catherine Gabriel, Selectmen Boyd Jackson and Dick Gandt, Kevin Harutunian, Steve Whelan, Chief Jen Brown and David Larson.
- II. **Minutes of February 24, 2020.** No action taken.
- III. **FinCom Model Status.** Based on the assumptions currently in the model of three percent increases to the Masco and Elementary School base budgets, the model projects the Town to be approximately \$589,000 over the levy limit for FY 2021. Based on assumptions of six percent increases to Masco and Elementary School base budgets, the model would project the Town to be approximately another \$6700,000 over the levy limit for FY 2021.
- IV. **Department Budget Presentations.**
 - a. Masco. General discussion about state determination of net school spending and calculations. Topsfield's share is projected to increase. Discussion with Masconomet Regional School Committee (MRSC) member Zillie Theodorou regarding MRSC's proposed budget for FY 2021. Based on the discussion, it appears that the MRSC is considering including funding for a school resource officer within its proposed budget.
 - b. Others may be scheduled. No other presentations.
- V. **Department Budget Review and Approval.** General discussion regarding base budget. Chairman Jon Guido recommended that the Finance Committee consider voting the base budget, non-guideline items, capital items and the Elementary School proposed budget. Discussion about public records requests costs, trends and legal fees

MOTION and VOTE: Karen Dow moved to approve the base budget as set forth by the spreadsheet prepared by Catherine Gabriel dated February 12, 2020, subject to further reconsideration and revision by the Finance Committee. Motion seconded by Lou Ross. Voted in favor of motion 6-0-0.

- V. **Department Budget Review and Approval (cont.).** Discussion about Elementary School proposed budget. Report provided by Karen Dow and Eric Menzer. The Elementary School Committee is still gathering information about and considering its proposed budget. To date there has been no vote by the Elementary School Committee regarding its proposed budget and there is no “banded sheet” showing the proposed budget yet. The Elementary School’s proposed budget is currently at approximately 12 percent over the levy limit as proposed by the administration, after starting at about approximately 22 percent over the levy limit. The current focus is on class size, five-day kindergarten and capital requests, including an operations supervisor, with five-day kindergarten being discussed as the primary concern. Extraordinary special education costs are projected to decrease for FY 2021. The Elementary School Committee is over the guidelines based on contracts for labor and has signaled that it will likely seek an override for FY 2021. General discussion on Elementary School Committee mission and historical requests for overrides. The Elementary School Committee has not yet communicated with the Board of Selectmen regarding its proposed budget. The Elementary School Committee and administration are scheduled to be on the agenda for the Finance Committee’s March 9, 2020 meeting.

General discussion about requests over guidelines. General consensus for support of additional labor for Fire Department coverage because it is a safety issue as fewer and fewer on-call personnel are available and showing up to emergencies, and because ambulance service provided by the Town is currently generating revenue. Discussion as to whether the request should be separated from base budget in Article Third of the warrant for individual consideration.

SCHOOL-SRO: Discussion led by Che Elwell. School Resource Officer (SRO). Boxford TA sent email to Topsfield and Middleton. Conversation has been informal but would like to formalize through Inter-municipal Agreement. TA has updated BOS Chair. MASCO would reimburse cost of SRO; they need actual costs.

TRI-TOWN TRUCK – Why submitted as part of Omnibus Budget versus a Capital Item? If pay as part of budget, then it stays in the budget. Other one-time costs in the school budget may be being pulled out. Late to add to capital, and complicated with a three-town process.

MASCO/Zilly – Arrived 8:45PM; Topsfield 6.2% increase in operating budget over FY20; reduction of \$256,000 in debt. 6.2% is separate from reduction of the bond payment. Next year, Topsfield will be higher (similar to this year) due to enrollment shift. Discussed state’s projections for enrollment. Also, SRO will be put in the MASCO Budget and reduced from the respective Town(s).

- VI. **Capital Items Review.** General discussion about funding for capital items. The Town is currently requesting approximately \$463,000 in funds from various sources for capital items. Kevin Harutunian led a review of the Town’s request for funding for capital items with reference to a handout dated February 26, 2020. Discussion regarding request for pickup truck for Tri-Town School Union.
- VII. **Town Meeting Warrant Articles.** No updates provided for assignments or recommendations for Town Meeting Warrant articles.

- VIII. **Correspondence.** None reported.
- IX. **Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting.** None.
- X. **Upcoming Meeting Schedule.** Meeting to be posted for March 9, 2020 at 7:00 P.M.
- XI. **Adjourn:** A motion to adjourn was made by Karen Dow at 8:50PM. Motion seconded by Che Elwell. Voted in favor of motion 6-0-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lou Ross and Catherine Gabriel

Materials used at the meeting:

1. Budget Handout prepared by C.Gabriel dated February 12, 2020
2. Capital Requests Itemization dated February 26, 2020