



Cohasset School Committee Meeting

School Committee Minutes

Tuesday, March 15, 2016
Town Hall-Selectmen's Office
41 Highland Avenue
Cohasset, MA

In Attendance: Jeanne Astino, Chairman
Mary McGoldrick
Ellen Maher
Barbara Stefan

Also in Attendance: Barbara Cataldo, Superintendent

Joint Meeting with Board of Selectmen

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairman Astino called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. Roll Call Vote; Barbara Stefan-Present, Ellen Maher-Present, Jeanne Astino-Present, Mary McGoldrick-Present.

Presentation of Preliminary Budget Overview to Board of Selectmen

Chairman Astino stated the School Committee is holding a public hearing tomorrow night at 7 p.m. during the School Committee meeting. Tonight they will discuss their budget priorities, student achievement objectives, FY17 request school budget, net budget, enrollment trends, staffing and special education trends. Chairman Astino gave an overview of the School Committee Budget Priorities.

Superintendent Cataldo discussed the Osgood, Deer Hill and CMHS goals as well as the Special Education goals. Mrs. Maher presented the requested budget for the schools for FY17. This is a 4.7% increase. The Committee has adjusted the budget and deferred several requests for this year. Mrs. McGoldrick gave an overview of Special Education. She explained to help with the needs of Special Education they are utilizing \$200,000 from FY17 anticipated receipts from the circuit breaker. Mrs. McGoldrick discussed special education enrollment and benchmarking that they have done.

Mrs. Maher discussed essential staffing that is needed and contractual obligations. She also discussed items that the Committee had to defer for this year. The total deferred requests was \$199,052. Mrs. McGoldrick explained what the net budget is and what is included in it. She discussed revolving accounts, grants, awards and gifts. Superintendent Cataldo discussed enrollment trends which have increased and class sizes which they continue to try to keep down. Mrs. Maher finished up the discussion with Special Education trends and staffing.

Board of Selectmen Chairman Gaumer stated there is a 1% gap on the ask for the operating budget versus what has been outlined in the budget. There are certain items in the budget that are predictable

year to year. The one that is not predictable is Special Education. This has been a long term issue for the Town. There is a level of volatility with Special Education. The Town has 8,000 residents and is trying to educate a whole school system of 1600 students without regionalization. It is a high wire act.

Mr. Senior stated he has been notified the Chapter 70 numbers have been increased by approximately \$54,000 for the schools. Chairman Gaumer clarified the budget is really over by \$446, 000 if they didn't use circuit breaker money. He is not criticizing anyone, it is the reality. They, as a whole, have to deal with this much more effectively in the future. This issue is not going away. Mrs. McGoldrick agreed and stated it had been discussed at budget meetings that this borrowing mechanism can only be done once. Selectman Kennedy thanked the School Committee for their detailed presentation. She added that most communities are saddled with service needs. They need to figure out how to support this model. Chairman Astino added that it is difficult to determine how much the schools will receive from the state. They have learned that the budget is based on needs and there cannot be wants.

Chairman Gaumer stated this should be treated as a one-time item. The Board should look at it as that. They have to find an alternative funding source and come up with a long term solution. There are two sources; General Stabilization or Reserve Fund. Selectman McCarthy added that the Board will be discussing the hotel/meals tax tonight. Chairman Gaumer suggested the Town could ask Town Meeting to take \$192,000 from Stabilization less what they put in (which is \$100,000) leaving a net of \$92,000. Selectman Kennedy stated this is a triage. The Board agreed they have to find a way to fund this one time item and get all the stakeholders together and figure out what to do for the future.

Chairman Astino advised the Selectmen that the School Committee is not voting their budget tomorrow night. They are holding the public hearing on the budget. They have time to strategize before they vote.

Chairman Gaumer said he hopes the School Committee takeaway tonight is that the Selectmen want to help solve this issue and figure out a long range plan.

School Committee meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.