

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
OF THE
DARTMOUTH SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

December 16, 2019

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Kathleen Amaral at 5:30 p.m. in Room 314 at the Dartmouth Town Hall.

Present were the following members: Mrs. Amaral, Mr. Oliver, Dr. Karafotis, Dr. Jenkins and Mr. Nunes.

Also present: Dr. Gifford, Ms. Roy, Mr. Kiely, Walter Smith, Esquire and Mrs. Genthner.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Dr. Jenkins to adjourn to Executive Session in order to provide an update with respect to collective bargaining for union and non-union personnel and to reconvene in open session at 6:35 p.m. with the Select Board and Finance Committee in Room 304 for the purpose of discussing financial policies and budget timeline and goals for the upcoming budget season and any other matters that may properly come before the Committee. On a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

The Committee reconvened with the Select Board and Finance Committee at 6:40 p.m. in Room 304 for the purpose of discussing financial policies and budget timeline and goals for the upcoming budget season and any other matters that may properly come before the Committee.

Mrs. Amaral, Chair of the School Committee, introduced School Committee members as well as School Administrators in attendance: Vice-Chair Mr. Oliver, Dr. Karafotis, Mr. Nunes, Dr. Jenkins and Superintendent Dr. Gifford and Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations Mr. Kiely.

Teresa Hamm, Chair of the Finance Committee, introduced Finance Committee members in attendance: Gloria Bancroft, Jeffrey Raymon, Louis Garibaldi, Robert Gauvin, and Michael Proulx. Adam Silvia was not present.

Stanley Mickelson, Chair of the Select Board, introduced Select Board members in attendance: Frank Gracie, John Haran, Shawn McDonald, and David Tatelbaum.

Also in attendance were Shawn MacInnes, Town Administrator, and Greg Barnes, Town Treasurer.

Mr. MacInnes stated the purpose of this evening's meeting is to "kick-off" the FY21 budget season and to answer any questions the Committees may have concerning the process; Mr. MacInnes referenced the memo he and Mr. Barnes prepared and which was included in the packet provided to Committee members in preparation for the meeting.

In response to "Is there anything new in the packet?" Mr. Barnes responded "there is nothing material."

Mr. MacInnes stated the Town asks that departments level fund their operating budgets and to provide a mission statement for their respective department as well as provide a list of key objectives for FY21.

Ms. Hamm stated the Finance Committee is asking that Town Departments prioritize and explain the rationale for requests when making their respective presentations before its Committee which is a change from past presentations which were mostly general overviews of department budgets.

Ms. Hamm asked that if this change is not in "this letter" that it be added before it goes out to the departments.

Mr. Nunes commented that this is the Town's process and that the School Department's process is different.

Ms. Hamm asked how it was different.

Mr. Nunes stated that the School Department has its own budget forms and that its budget process is different from other Town Departments.

Mr. McDonald asked if the Finance Committee has heard from the "County " (Bristol County Agricultural High School. ("Bristol Aggie")

Ms. Hamm stated the Committee requested a presentation last year but "Bristol Aggie" was unable to provide one as it was going through many changes and what was requested was not significantly different from previous years.

Mr. Barnes stated the school is going through a significant capital upgrade and noted that this year the Town is anticipating a substantial increase in its request which is factored into this "year's assumptions."

Mr. Proulx asked what the Town's cost per student is for Bristol Aggie and how has it "trended" over the last five years.

Mr. Barnes stated he does not have that information readily available however he stated it is more expensive than the cost per student for the Dartmouth Public Schools.

Dr. Jenkins stated it is significantly higher; approximately \$3,000 to \$5,000 per student higher.

Mr. Barnes clarified the cost by reporting the State provides an assessment to the Town to subsidize the cost per student at Bristol Aggie so that the actual cost to the Town is quite low.

Mr. Tatelbaum stated his focus to save money for the Town is on the high administrative costs at Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School (GNBRVTHS) and, through our "representatives", to put pressure on the school to address its exorbitant administrative costs.

Dr. Jenkins agreed with Mr. Tatelbaum's comments but stated that the "formula is the formula" and the funds will go to the school regardless.

Mr. Gauvin asked Mr. Barnes if the Town has a "feel" for what funding will be received from the State this year.

Mr. Barnes stated approximately \$14 million which is an increase.

Mr. Barnes explained that the recent passage of educational reform will not benefit the Town of Dartmouth to any significant extent.

Ms. Hamm asked if money for special education transportation was included.

Mr. Kiely stated it was not.

Mr. Kiely added to Mr. Barnes comments on Chapter 70 aid by stating Dartmouth will be looking at minimal aid which everyone in the state will receive and does not "add up" to much (approximately \$20 per student.)

Mr. Barnes stated the Town's number one revenue source is property tax and the number two source is State Aid which is larger than local receipts (i.e., motor vehicle excise taxes to building permits, etc.)

Mr. Barnes explained how the State Budget will be reduced in the next year.

Dr. Jenkins pointed out "this" will only get worse over the year as the State is trying to bring "us" in line to where we ought to be with respect to funding "our" schools; Dartmouth is in the lowest 13th percentile for per pupil spending and the Town has been generous to the School Department by providing funding over "foundation."

Dr. Jenkins continued commenting that per pupil spending is too low and what is offered to Town employees (teachers, police officers, etc.) is not enough particularly with the high cost of health insurance.

Mr. Oliver agreed with Dr. Jenkins and stated he believes more can be done.

Mr. Gracie asked where will the Town get the money.

Dr. Jenkins stated an override was needed.

Mr. Mickelson stated the three committees meeting tonight cannot do this alone we need community members; we cannot raise taxes.

Ms. Hamm commented that last year the Finance Committee had a representative on the school committee budget planning process and will be selecting a representative at its next meeting.

Ms. Hamm continued stating the Select Board reached out to form a joint communication in order to "brain storm" instead of meeting separately.

Mr. Michelson agreed with the open dialogue.

Mr. Proulx agreed with the comments about the override advising that "you" do your homework and educate the public.

Mr. Tatelbaum proposed forming an override sub-committee to collaborate on how to educate the public on the issue.

Mr. Barnes provided informational notes: the median tax bill is \$3,300 for single family homes which is the lower end for the State, the Town is a triple "A" community and we have a desirable level of reserve which is there to provide for fiscal flexibility.

Mr. Mickelson requested some appointees for the sub-committee Mr. Tatelbaum proposed and that the discussion should start now.

Ms. Hamm volunteered to be on the override sub-committee and will confer with her committee members for more volunteers.

Mr. Oliver moved, seconded by Mr. Nunes to adjourn from Open Session with the Select Board and Finance Committee at 7:45 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bonny L. Gifford".

Bonny L. Gifford, Ed. D.
Superintendent