

Finance Committee Minutes

May 1st 2018

Mr. Carson called the meeting to order at 5:40PM.

Present were Mr. Mark Carson, Mr. Robert Miller, Mr. Steven Klein, Mrs. Sandy Walker, Mrs. Marilyn Fracasso and Mrs. Prudence Spaulding. Mr. Douglas Newman was a guest.

The minutes from April 19th 2018 were accepted as amended, Mrs. Fracasso 1st, Mr. Miller 2nd passed unanimously.

This meeting had been called to review the SBRSD budget as requested by Mr. Nathaniel Yohalem upon learning that the Finance Committee had voted not to recommend the school's **Operating and Transportation** budget (March 22nd 2018). Discussion centered upon the constant raising of the school budget, while the enrollment continues to decline. While the possible closing of the Egremont School had been discussed, and apparently only one student had signed up to attend it, Mr. Miller stated that he had heard that there was a "grass roots" effort to obtain more students and thus justify its operation. Mrs. Spaulding stated that she had understood that though it had had many repairs it was still not handicapped accessible. Nevertheless any funds that would be saved from its closing would (it is understood from the school) be placed in their A&D Account.

Mrs. Walker had received the school Financial Report dated April 30th 2018 and shared it with the members by e-mail. She stated that she noted that 25% of the budget was assigned to retirement and health costs. And she also noted that the Contingency Fund, which had back in March been raised from \$78,000 to \$200,000 and had included a note stating it was raised to pay for the costs of moving 6th grade to the middle school was now still \$200,000.00 but categorized as "Undesignated".

The fluctuations in enrollments caused the town's requests to fluctuate making it difficult to plan each year upon what each town's share of the Operating and Transportation would be. Mr. Newman suggested that the Street Listings circulated each year should provide a correct assessment of the number of children attending from New Marlborough. However, Mrs. Walker stated that the yearly assessment (by the state) was based on several things including the town's property valuation, the town's income and not just the number of students. The (FY 19) amount required by the school is \$113,026 less than the FY18 year; however it may increase in FY 20. Sheffield's FY 19 required an extra of about \$500,000! The Towns are in the process of

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petitioning the state to allow rolling attendance numbers and thus make the increasing and decreasing smoother.

Mr. Klein returned to the present budget and stated that in most towns about 50% of the town's budget was needed to provide for the schools. He had the opportunity to review the school report that Mrs. Walker had sent and considered that it represented a thoughtful report. He stated that he would support the school budget. Mrs. Walker stated that she had been impressed with the Financial Report and its thoroughness.

Mrs. Fracasso stated that she noted that the school had planned to move the 6th grade into the middle school but had not done it yet but had asked for funds to complete this. She also stated that she considered the school had more administration than was required for the number of students in attendance. Mr. Carson stated that he had had concerns about the small class sizes and the number of the staff remaining. Mrs. Spaulding stated that she had spoken to the School Superintendent about developing a program that placed high school seniors in the work places part-time, but nothing had been done about this. She stated that she had been at a meeting with Mr. Pignatelli who had stated that there were jobs going unfilled because the graduating students had not been prepared to enter the work force. She also was concerned by the small class sizes and the non-reduction in staff.

A motion to recommend the **Operating and Transportation** part of the SBRSD budget was made by Mr. Klein with Mrs. Walker 2nd, Mr. Carson and Mrs. Fracasso voted not to recommend the budget while Mr. Klein and Mrs. Walker and Mr. Miller voted for recommendation. Mrs. Spaulding stated that she had been on the Committee for many years and had learned that the school was not willing to make changes or respond to the town's requests. Never the less she would vote for the recommendation and the motion passed.

A motion to adjourn at 6:05PM by Mrs. Fracasso 1st, Mrs. Spaulding 2nd passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Prudence Spaulding, secretary