

## Finance Committee

May 26, 2015

Attending: Chairman Steve Noone, Vice-Chair Mike Majors, Clerk Margaret Woolley Busse, Doug Tindal, Bob Evans, Bill Mullin, Roland Bourdon, Jason Cole (new member), David Wellinghoff (new member)

Chairman Noone called the meeting to order at 7:33pm

- I. Public Participation: none heard
- II. School District Third Quarter Report: Claire Jeannotte, Director of Finance presented. Current \$112,000 revenue problem/shortfall; SPED costs were higher than budgeted, but “saved” because collaborative gave out 1-time distribution in the range of \$400k, didn’t go negative. Net risk—unfavorable \$323K. Bill: why are staff expenses up by \$300k? Claire: because budgeted for more staff vacancies that didn’t materialize. Mike: What about SPED transportation? Do we have control over those costs? Dr. Brand: These costs can vary a lot during the year, depending on students’ needs, so difficult to predict. Margaret: Is there a minimum requirement for E&D? Claire: No. Margaret: Had we not gotten the one-time distribution from SPED collaboration, we would have been \$450K further in deficit. Why wasn’t more budgeted for this item? Claire: I didn’t build the budget, so not sure. Margaret: What is the latest with working with legislators for budget relief on SPED? Kristina: Some progress being made. Doug: Volatility index: What are the things that are out of our control? What are the principle positive and negative trends? Where are we most at risk for volatility? So for future, these quarterly reports could be improved by addressing these elements of volatility. Bob: Health insurance costs—may need to change the way the health insurance is budgeted. David: What are examples of legal expenses? Dr. Brand: Special education hearings, sometimes staff issues. Jason: Question about PARCC and wireless technology in the classroom and also about E-Rate. Dr. Brand: We will be prepared if/when State Board of Education votes to adopt it state-wide. No answer on E-Rate. Jason: What level of autonomy do district employees have to spend money since we’re in deficit situation? Dr. Brand: we have to monitor costs very carefully at this point. Jason: What about circuit breaker? Claire: Definitely favorable for us this year and laws allow a one year rollover to use the monies. Steve: If we do end the year with a deficit, then will we have to dip into E&D? Claire: We expect to not have to dip into E&D. Doug: recommends trying to create some “shock absorbers” to deal with volatility.
- III. Introduction of Jason Cole and David Wellinghoff
- IV. Election of Officers: Bob Evans: I nominate Mike Majors to be Chair. Vote is unanimous. Bob Evans: I nominate Margaret Busse to be Vice-Chair. Bob Evans: I nominate Roland Bourdon to be clerk. Margaret Busse: I nominate Doug Tindal to be clerk. Roland: I withdraw my candidacy. Vote is unanimous for Doug.
- V. Minutes approved with Bill Mullin abstaining, and new members David and Jason abstaining
- VI. Committee reports:

- a. Mike: Minuteman Tech—committee voted to approve a new building; some tensions there amongst member communities
  - b. Roland: CPC committee is considering proposing going up to 3% surcharge (taxes) instead of 1.5%
    - i. Margaret: Acton 2020 also discussed the issue re: the Land Use/Econ Dev Director and submitted a letter to the BoS subsequently: Janet: Steve L. found a lot of the feedback really helpful and is taking them seriously
- VII. Bill's seven points of his philosophy for town management
- a. Spend money as if it's your own money
  - b. Go visit the physical locations of properties/issues being considered
  - c. Focus on recommendations, not just criticisms
  - d. Focus on land use from the perspective of 25 years from now
  - e. Treat our businesses like customers
  - f. Go deep on an issue
  - g. Every year is a snowflake
- VIII. Meeting adjourned 8:49pm