

**TOWN OF SOMERS
BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, MARCH 13, 2006**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting was called to order by Chairman James Persano at 7:07 p.m. Present were Thomas Mazzoli, Michael Parker, James Persano, Marilyn Pronovost and George Warner. Also attending: Treasurer Edward Sullivan.

II. CORRESPONDENCE

There was none.

III. BUDGET REVIEW MEETING

Board of Education: Angelo Vespe, Ph.D. introduced himself as Superintendent of Schools and then welcomed Board of Education member Tim Geib who gave a slide presentation. Mr. Geib explained that the Board of Ed is striving to maintain a safe and healthy environment, provide quality programs and retain and develop quality staff while ensuring fiscal responsibility.

He noted that a major challenge this year is the increased fuel expenses. Total fixed costs are 88% of the budget increase. Energy and insurance, both fixed costs, have gone up 6.42% this year, which is the largest increase in the budget.

No additional teachers have been added at the elementary and middle schools. The high school has asked for a 0.2 teacher and 3 paraprofessionals for FTE, all of which are required under state/federal mandates. The high school is also being evaluated for NEASC accreditation which will cost \$9,000.00.

Last year the proposals to add a custodian at Mabel B. Avery School and an athletic trainer were both dropped because of budget cuts, and both positions were considered necessities. They are included again in the 2006-07 budget recommendation. Additionally, a computer support person is being suggested.

It was also noted that the school system is currently ranked 120th in the state and in 2000 it was ranked 146th. Concern was expressed by a resident about this decline. Another audience member commented that the school does very well with the budget allowance that it receives

each year and makes a tremendous effort to utilize every dollar wisely. He commented that the school system is an excellent one and the students get an outstanding education.

George Warner asked what the actual budget is for Special Education and was told that \$27,000.00 is allocated for teachers and \$54,900 is allocated for paraprofessionals.

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Michael Parker asked if a dollar amount could be placed on the energy increase for the budget and figures from the 2005-06 year were given along with the anticipated increase. It was explained that the middle school runs on electricity.

A 22% increase for electricity has been included. A 17% increase began in February and there will be a 4% additional increase effective in April. It is expected that for the period of July to December, 2006, 22% is probably a good figure, but adjustments may have to be made when the new year begins. The town puts fuel out for bid through CCROG and generally receives the new numbers in June.

Mr. Warner noted that the total cost for new positions is just under \$197,000.00 and asked if this figure would include fringes. No medical and dental figures are available yet, so this figure includes salary only.

An audience member asked about the parking fee at the high school and was told that the Board of Education is seeking to eliminate this fee, which has only been charged for one year and was instituted to help offset some of the budget cut. The total parking fees collected were about \$13,000.00.

A high school science teacher commented that the government is requiring the teaching of specific courses but they do not provide the additional funding for supplies needed. The budget does not make allowances for them either. Additionally, no help is given for professional development costs. The teachers are expected to keep up with the government curriculum and professional requirements, yet each year when they seek the necessary funds, they are turned down.

An audience member asked the town to recognize that seniors are living on fixed incomes and property taxes keep going up. The Senior Center needs certain items, but there is never any budget allowance for them. He expressed concern that the BOE budget is above the 4% guideline set by the Board of Finance and stated that it will be difficult to get seniors to vote for this budget.

Another citizen stated that the Board of Ed budget is modest. He added that the children are the town's future and they require our support. The audience responded with applause.

A resident asked how to ask that a budget be increased. If a proposed budget doesn't pass, it is decreased. A Board of Education member said that the best way to support the school system is to vote for the budget as proposed. The BOE may ask to do more next year if their budget proposal is supported this year. Another suggestion was to add a referendum to increase the budget.

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Mr. Persano noted that holding a budget hostage is not the way to let your displeasures with the town be known. Such a situation causes problems rather than fixing them. A good way to support the town is to vote in favor of it's budget.

IV. SELECTMEN UPDATE

No update was given.

V. REVENUE FORECAST

Mr. Sullivan presented figures he had gathered regarding a revenue forecast. He will gather more information for the next meeting, using .75 mils which would be a 0.6 to 0.8 mil increase.

VI. MINUTES REVIEW

A motion was made by Tom Mazzoli, seconded by George Warner and unanimously voted to approve the minutes of March 6, 2006 as presented.

VII. MINUTES CORRECTIONS – There were none.

VIII. BILLS, TRANSFERS AND APPROPRIATIONS

A motion was made by Tom Mazzoli, seconded by George Warner and unanimously voted to approve the following transfers:

From the Fire Department: \$4,000.00 from Acct. 20-16-509.5 (Volunteer Stipend) to Acct. 20-16-531.1 (Building Maintenance) and \$2,000.00 from Acct. 20-16-509.5 (Volunteer Stipend) to

Acct. 20-16-560.1 (Electricity).

From the Fire Marshal: \$150.00 from Acct. 20-10-531.5 (Vehicle Maintenance) to Acct. 20-10-568.1 (Training); \$525.00 from Acct. 20-10-520.1 (Equipment & Supplies) to

Acct. 20-10-525.1 (Fire Systems Maintenance); and \$175.00 from Acct. 20-10-563.1 (Pagers) to Acct. 20-10-568.2 (Public Education).

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IX. ADJOURNMENT

It was the consensus of the Board to adjourn at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Timmons, Recording Secretary

MINUTES ARE NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVAL AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING.