

**Education Budget Public Hearing**  
**Tuesday, March 21, 2017**  
**Tantasqua Regional Junior High School Cafeteria**  
**Sturbridge, MA**

The hearing commenced at 6:07pm with Dr. Erin Noseck (EN), and Deb Boyd (DB) present to discuss the purpose, decreases, increases and overall breakdown of the education budget for the upcoming FY18.

The following Finance Committee members were present: Kathleen Neal (KN), Michael Serio (MS), Laurence Morrison (LM), James Waddick (JW), Joni Light (JL), Suzanne Smiley (SS) and Jared Burns (JB).

Absent: Bruce Boyson (BB), and Michael Hager (MH).

DB stated that a 2.56% increase in Tantasqua's budget is due to necessary emotional and social support services. Overall the education budget increase is 3%. Out of district placements into technical programs and resulting tuition is expected to be level. The town is losing revenue for out of district special education tuition for Pathways, as those students are aging out and graduating the program. The school system is moving away from using school choice funds for the operating budget in order to reserve funds for future capital items. The vast majority of expenditures and the increase in budget are for salaries (67% of 3% increase), 99% of which are contracted, and insurances (18% of 3% increase). The result is a \$22,556,046 operating budget, which is a 2.6% increase from last year.

DB explained that reductions in spending are the result of six high school instructor retirements. There was a change in providers for health insurance, which helped to almost level fund the health insurance line item budget. The school also entered into a net metering credit project which will hopefully reduce energy expenditures moving forward.

EN discussed several new and needed positions: a district wide coordinator of student support services, district technology maintenance, .4 (of full time hours) junior high adjustment level counselor, and a .6 (of full time hours) senior high psychologist. Technology needs are to be funded through school choice funds. DB stated, in addition, that capital projects are to be funded through school choice funds. She reviewed the shared funding and minimum tax contributions of the five towns enrolled at Tantasqua, as well as the net school spending requirement of \$18,729, where the town is approximately at \$20,000. Moving forward, they are holding gate fees for funding the restoration of turf in fields instead of contributing those fees into the general education fund.

EN and DB opened the floor for discussion.

KN asked if they anticipated any financial changes with the new administration and legislation going forward. EN answered that Chapter 2A was filed for reduction which is relative to teacher quality, and special education was level funded. She added that they will wait and see what changes occur.

DB stated that there is no chance that the upcoming charter school for K-8 students will impact Tantasqua. Four local students have been accepted to the Old Sturbridge Village Charter School. April 1 is when the state has committed to stating financial impact. She added that funding does not come from Chapter 70, and that funding the charter school creates a new line item. There are also reimbursements to the public school over the first three years of the charter school being open. Town will pay 25% in year one. In Sturbridge, the impact would be 25% of \$12,000 per pupil expenditure,

equaling \$3,000.00 per student.

*Public hearing ended at 6:33 pm.*

**Education Committee Meeting**  
**Tuesday, March 21, 2017**  
**Tantasqua Regional Junior High School Library**  
**Sturbridge, MA**

Motions carried unanimously for all four motions presented to propose the budget as presented at public hearing.

**Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, March 21, 2017**  
**Tantasqua Regional Junior High School Cafeteria**  
**Sturbridge, MA**

**The chair called the meeting to order at 6:50pm with the following members present, Kathleen Neal (KN), Michael Serio (MS), Jared Burns (JB), James Waddick (JW), Suzanne Smiley (SS), Laurence Morrison (LM), and Joni Light (JL).**  
**Absent: Michael Hager, Bruce Boyson**

**FY2018 Budget Review Process**

KN discussed how department heads being scheduled to come in to answer questions about the budget is a new process and stated that Barbara requested the committee ask technical questions ahead of time in order for them to be prepared.

LM stated that the first year he served on the committee, he presented what he learned from an interview with the department head occurring separately from the meeting, then the department head would present the rationale for the budget and answer any questions. The emphasis on knowledge of the details in the budget is that the Finance Committee should be able to answer any questions presented at Town Meeting by the residents. When the Selectmen and the Finance Committee disagree, the vast majority of the time, the Finance Committee decision is supported by the residents because the committee is not political and is well researched on the budget.

MS stated that there are several drawbacks to having department heads discuss their budget at the Finance Committee meeting, such as pressure to agree, possible need for them to return and scheduling conflicts. However, he added that this may make the budget process move faster. JW added that any disputes over the budget between the Selectmen and the Town Administrator should be settled before being presented to the Finance Committee.

SS stated that the percentage of the budget for FY17 that is spent should be presented before discussing the FY18 budget. She added that the Finance Committee should know what departments the Reserve Fund is benefiting the most often in comparison to others. LM stated that the spending pattern for the current FY doesn't influence the following year or proposed budget.

The committee discusses the logistics of budget variations and the stipulations of over – budgeting. MS

stated that the town encourages turn back of unspent funds in order to stop departments from unnecessary spending.

### **Reserve Fund Transfers**

KN spoke about the need for a new handicap switch for the front door of library, and the remaining \$14,340.07 in the Library Building Purchase of Services Account #11962-52000, that is not spent but is allocated. JL asked if the library or public safety door replacement is eligible for payment through capital project funds. KN stated they are separate accounts and must be over \$5,000 to be qualified as a capital project. The request funds replacing the entire handicap entrance system.

*SS moved the motion to transfer the sum of \$3,705.00 from the Reserve Fund into the Library Building Purchase of Services Account #11962-52000, JL seconds, motion accepted 7-0-0.*

KN stated that the second reserve fund transfer is for a retirement payment the town owes by law in the amount of \$1,585.00. The public employer has to pay contribution to the retirement fund for municipal employees when deployed on active military duty.

*SS moved the motion to transfer the sum of \$1,585.00 from the Reserve Fund into the Worcester Retirement Account #19102-51800, JL seconds, motion accepted 7-0-0.*

Outstanding meeting minutes for review be postponed until the following meeting on Thursday, March 23, 2018.

### **No Old Business**

### **New Business**

The committee discusses various liaison assignments.

### **No public access**

*JL moved the motion to adjourn, JW seconds, motion accepted 7-0-0 at 7:38pm.*