

Finance Committee Meeting
Minutes – November 18, 2013
Town Hall, Lower Level Hearing Room, 7:30 P.M.

Members Present: Patricia-Lee Achorn, William Brack, Arnold Cohen (late), Gordon Gladstone, Charles Goodman, Alexander Korin, Ira Miller
Absent: Aaron Agulnek, Laura Nelson, Edward Philips

1. The first item on the agenda was Tim Farmer, School Department Superintendent, and Emily Smith-Lee, School Committee Chair, to discuss the benchmark towns.
2. Tim Farmer stated that they do have a list of ten communities that needs updating. It depends on the variables in regard to education when they look at districts. The Department of Education has a tool called DART, District Analysis Review and Assistance Tool. Anyone can look at a financial district and compare to six other communities. Per pupil expenditure, comparison of staffing, how much administration for number of children in district, how many Special Education teachers, interpreting a benchmark, and what are average salaries. Our list is Belmont, Needham, Natick, Holliston, Franklin, and Scituate. On a variety of variables the Department of Education says it is similar to Sharon.
3. There was considerable discussion regarding benchmarking and what is needed by the schools and what is needed by the town. Different towns have different variables, but a consensus was needed of the criteria to use to determine a list of comparable towns and possible additional towns for the schools.
4. The next item regarded the new teacher evaluation.
5. Tim Farmer explained that the schools have a strategic plan that takes them through 2014-2017. The goal issues around creating a district-wide social comparison for students home communication. The school district has a lot of programs over many goals. Then there is the Massachusetts Standard Core, a national curriculum. Some are traditional set standards to common core. We need a lot of professional development. ESL and ELL is growing and we're not doing enough. Any teacher who wants to be certified in three years needs to take that course. Regarding the new education evaluation system, the Department of Education provided a model contract. We varied very little so adopted the state contract. All teachers will be evaluated on four basic standards. Teachers have to be able to meet the needs of all students.
6. There was much discussion regarding the teacher evaluation, its criteria, and the results being released to the general public.
7. The next item on the agenda was the school budget.
8. Tim Farmer reported about a five-year financial plan for the Sharon schools. Out of a \$37M budget, \$31M is in salaries. For FY'15 \$800,000 is needed for the increase in salaries. 2% is the cost of living.
9. There was considerable discussion regarding the budget, when it would be finalized and when the Finance Committee would meet with the School Department and School Committee to review it.

10. There was a suggestion to meet in early February for review. Questions in advance that make the discussion more focused, would be helpful for the review process.
11. There was some feedback on Town Meeting on how the Finance Committee did and how it went, with the consensus that they did well on the Brickstone proposal.
12. Ben Puritz was not available to give update on Rattlesnake Hill and budget process so this update would be for the next meeting.
13. At the next meeting, discuss the budget review, Rattlesnake Hill review, and Town Meeting cycle.
14. The next meeting will be December 9, 2013.
15. It was **MOVED** and **SECONDED** to adjourn.
16. **VOTED:** 7-0-0.
17. The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.