

BUDGET COORDINATING GROUP
MINUTES – MARCH 4, 2010
Town Room, Town Hall

COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Andy Churchill, Farshid Hajir, Chris Hoffmann, Patricia Holland, Bonnie Isman, Stephanie O’Keeffe, John Musante, Alberto Rodriguez, Larry Shaffer, Doug Slaughter, Andy Steinberg, Gerry Weiss

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Rob Detweiler, Irv Rhodes

Meeting called to order at 11:35 a.m.

Public Comment: none

Approval of Minutes and Summary Points:

- Minutes from Nov 19, Dec 17, Feb 4 approved by consensus
- Summary Points for Feb 10 reaffirmed by consensus

Updates: Where are we now:

- Select Board drafting op ed in support of override
- Finance Committee unanimously supported override; drafting statement and letter to editor
- School committees have approved the amounts earmarked for schools in the override
- Library Trustees have drafted a FAQ; Friends of Libraries writing letter/op ed
- Negotiations with unions: schools’ negotiations are continuing, and making progress; firefighters eliminated COLA for FY11, net savings of \$85k, Town gave on the education benefit the firefighters wanted, similar to police benefit; non-unit town and school employees have given up their COLAs for FY11; SEIU negotiations continue.

Next Steps: Information and Messages for Voters:

- Discussed roles, what’s allowable – in general, don’t use public resources to advocate
- Finance Committee will produce statement of facts; will answer questions if asked
- On Town website: collect materials related to override, on budget page, with links to other sites – school and library
- Discussed whether group had adequately described what would be done by the town if revenues and/or salary givebacks came at levels that differ from the projections used in calculating the override amount; decided that the description/bullets from the BCG’s February 10th meeting covered this adequately.

Summary Points

- That key explanatory documents including: the most recent restoration lists; the chart detailing how much the override would cost owners of property at various assessed values; the BCG's recommendation to the Select Board; the ballot language; useful Department of Revenue information; and other relevant materials to help inform voters, will be compiled and added to a new Override section on the FY11 Budget Process page on the Town web site. There will also be links to the Schools' and Libraries' budget pages.
- That the BCG reaffirmed its shared understanding of and support for the intentions detailed in two summary points from the February 10th meeting, reprinted here:
 - That to ensure mutual understanding, we restated and reaffirmed our recommendation that should any of the significant remaining uncertainties (COLA negotiations, State aid, recommended restorations totaling less than current estimates) swing positive, we would not tax to the levy limit allowed by a successful override in those amounts.
 - That there is commitment from the professional budget officials to not seek restorations in excess of the current recommended dollar amounts (or such amounts adjusted downward, per the point above,) though the specifics and prioritization of those restorations by the Schools will continue to be determined. The prioritized lists have been a tool to help us determine the size and scope of needed restorations; we recognize the necessity of flexibility to allow for responsible management of Town, School and Library programs and budgets.
- That we will meet again after the election, on March 25th at 11:30 a.m., to consider next steps and the timeline leading up to Town Meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 1:06.

Submitted by Andy Churchill