

Budget Coordinating Group
Minutes
April 29, 2010

Location: Town Room, Town Hall

Present: Rob Detweiler, Maria Geryk, Farshid Hajir, Pat Holland, Rick Hood, Bonnie Isman, John Musante, Stephanie O’Keeffe, Doug Slaughter, Andy Steinberg

John Musante reported that the house is voting on budget amendments. Cahill is talking about possible extra lottery money, but unknown at this time.

Farshid Hajir urged support of Amendment 14 to the pending House version of the State Budget that would put more responsibility on the state for out of district special education placement. Farshid also mentioned certain provisions in the Municipal Relief Bill that are not good and hoped they would be removed or modified.

There was discussion about the Amherst School Committee seeking legal advice on the Union 26 agreement with Pelham. Maria Geryk recommended that the chair of the Amherst School Committee speak with the chair of the Pelham Committee. Andy Steinberg suggested consideration of other regionalization options where possible. Rob Detweiler mentioned proposals at the state level being discussed which could force regionalization.

Andy Steinberg mentioned various corrections that were needed on the Finance Committee Report that would be forthcoming in a corrected handout, including a revised chart relating to library finances.

It was mentioned that Article 8 would be taken up at Monday’s Town Meeting and that it was doubtful that the school budget would be taken up on Monday.

Farshid Hajir mentioned that Leverett had passed their budget.

Stephanie O’Keeffe asked if anyone had heard of any amendments that would be made. No one said that they had.

It was discussed that the Town Meeting motion on the library appropriation does not include the entire library budget, which is different than how it has been done in the past. It was asked if the library budget vote would be done before the Town Meeting vote. Pat Holland agreed that would be a good idea and said it would be taken up on Tuesday.

There was a discussion about the Collins amendment. Stephanie O’Keeffe suggested that BCG’s position be that no amendments be made to the budgets. Pat Holland opposed this view and said it felt like BCG was taking too much control of Town Meeting. Andy Steinberg said that BCG

was simply a forum for all committees and departments to work together with the Finance Committee in a cooperative effort. Farshid Hajir said that BCG is not saying that Town Meeting does not have a vote as obviously it is the voting body.

Andy Steinberg reminded everyone of the requirement that any amendments made be in writing with three copies.

Rob Detweiler mentioned adding FTE information to the budgets. Andy Steinberg mentioned a general concern about FTE reporting being confusing.

Minutes were approved for the March 25 meeting.

Stephanie O’Keeffe provided summary points for this meeting:

- That we reaffirmed our shared understanding that if State Aid reductions are less than anticipated, the additional revenue would reduce the FY11 tax levy rather than increase spending. We emphasized staying true to the concept that the override amount was based in part on projections of a 4% State Aid cut, and that had we had different information, the override amount would have been less.
- That it is important for all to be aware of the financial and structural implications of potential legislative and local changes affecting School Regionalization.
- That to keep faith with the voters by adhering to the budget sizes and plans on which they based their votes, the BCG representatives agree to recommend to Town Meeting that any amendments to proposed budgets be opposed. While this is not binding on our home committees, we will urge them to support the budgets as presented. Because the BCG is a forum for sharing the community’s common interests as expressed by the elected and appointed representatives of the Town, Schools and Libraries, we believe that supporting the budgets as presented is consistent with our message to voters and the collaborative process that brought us to this point. There was some discussion about how to deal with the situation if Chapter 70 and/or ARRA funds increase. Possibly there could be an amendment at fall Town Meeting to deal with it. There is a possibility of Chapter 70 funds being replaced by ARRA funds (grant) which is not appropriated.

Andy Steinberg mentioned that it would be a good headline to say that “\$500,000 less than allowed by the override was appropriated by Town Meeting”.

The next meeting will take place on June 24.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Hood