

Board of Finance  
Annual Budget Hearing  
8:00 p.m., Monday, April 6, 2015  
Julian B. Thayer Auditorium, Coginchaug Regional High School

Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Loraine Coe, Rosemarie Naples, Helen Larkin, Laurie Tuttle, Molly Nolan  
Absent: Martin Anderson

Others: Laura Francis, John Szewczyk, Steve Levy, Maryjane Malavasi, approximately 30 members of the audience.

Loraine Coe called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m. and led with the pledge of allegiance. She then introduced Board of Finance members and Board of Selectmen. She noted that the Board held eight budget workshops in addition to their regular meetings; reviewing each and every budget line comparing them with previous years expenditures, adjusting the budgets accordingly. The Boards goal was to fund each department, board, or commission with the necessary budget to meet their needs while keeping focus on the bottom line and impact on the taxpayer. She stated that the towns' grand list has only increased by .06% this year compared to .96% last year. In addition state and local revenue has increased only slightly 1.16% and 1.26% respectively.

Union contract negotiations are currently underway. This year's proposed budget reflects a zero increase in all salary line items; \$20,000 has been put into contingency to be used towards adjustments once the union contract is ratified. Board Member Martin Anderson has agreed to serve on the negotiating committee.

The Board has increased the use of the reserve fund to save for long term needs thus helping reduce the use of the undesignated fund balance during the year. We have also asked all budget requestors to apply for grants when they are available. L. Coe continued by stating the Board sought to keep increases incrementally small; most increases were due to rate increases and engineering costs. She noted that there are also a number of budget and capital items that have decreased.

She then proceeded to present a PowerPoint presentation of the Financial State of the Town of Durham for fiscal year 2014-2015 and then presented the fiscal year 2015-2016 proposed town budget. (Copy attached)

2015-2016 Proposed Budget	\$7,349,870
2014-2015 Budget	\$6,930,370
Increase in dollars	\$ 419,500
Increase in percentage	6.05%

Loraine Coe opened the meeting for questions.

Martin French asked for clarification of the 6/30/2015 reserve balance estimate of \$927 for revaluation 2015 and the 2015-2016 appropriation of \$21,000. M. Malavasi stated that RFP's are being sought at this time and it is expected that a town meeting will be held to expend current reserve funds; it is estimated that \$927 will be left over in this account. The \$21,000 is an estimate that the Board puts in reserve every year for the next revaluation.

M. French ask for clarification of tree replacement reserve account in the amount of \$1,000. L. Francis responded that this reserve account was set up to due to the work of the Town Green Tree Design Committee who have developed an improvement plan for the Town Green. The committee will also be seeking grants and looking into other ways to raise funds.

Chuck Stengel asked about the increase in telephone and electric expense. L. Francis stated that the increase in broadband was more than anticipated and some phone lines were not eligible to be ported to Comcast. There also was in increase in electricity due to the contract re-negotiation.

Rick Parmelee asked if there were any projects between public works and RSD13 included in the proposed budget. L. Francis responded no.

R. Parmelee also stated that he felt the moratorium on using herbicide for roadside maintenance should be lifted due to the safety of town employees.

M. French asked for clarification of the operating budget of the Resident State Trooper program. L. Francis stated that the governor's proposed budget eliminated the 30% cost share the town is currently receiving. She noted that there has been a concerted effort to restore some of it. The town's current RST Peter DiGioia has retired and Troop F will be posting the position in the next couple of weeks.

Paul Maros asked if any monies have been set aside for drug prevention in the Health and Welfare budget. L. Francis stated that the Durham Middlefield Local Wellness Coalition, in conjunction with Durham Middlefield Youth and Family Services, is funded through a Drug-Free Communities Grant; both Stephanie Moran and Betsy Dean work closely with RSD13 and the Durham Fair Association during fair time with back pack checks.

R. Parmelee expressed his frustration with the Durham Volunteer Ambulance Corp over their in-ability to be forthcoming with several requests for financial information over the years. He requested that the Board ask them how many calls they are answering and how many calls are being answered by the Durham Volunteer Fire Department. He spoke about an incident where it took over an hour for the DVAC to get to a call and that the department is charging at a very high rate. He asked that their gross receipts be brought to the annual budget meeting.

Tom Wimler responded by stating that DVAC has been providing the Board with financials and has responded to 600 calls last year. He noted that the department is currently upgrading to a new computer system that will provide better statistics. He continued by stating that no resident of Durham ever gets a bill from DVAC; most likely what they are receiving is from an insurance company or they may receive a bill from a paramedic from the hospital (or other services) that would not be covered under insurance. He stated the billing service they utilize is able to bundle the cost with the hospital and insurance covers it. As for the revenue received through the billing company, DVAC uses it to pay the cost of billing services and stipends.

David Turley spoke as a member of the Library Board Trustees noting that the library budget for books and media has been flat for ten years and asked the Board for a modest increase in the amount of \$2,000. Richard Eriksen spoke to the same subject stating that he supports the \$2,000 increase.

Chuck Stengel asked for clarification of the building maintenance reserve fund. L. Francis stated that this fund is used for the maintenance and upkeep of any town building and noted that the amount has been increased over the last couple of years in preparation of the renovation of the two town owned buildings on Main Street.

George Eames IV spoke to areas of the budget that he felt there were large increases; public works, library, building department, activity center and building fund, salaries and employee retirement plan. He stated that the Board should have more independence on the budget process and separate themselves from the day to day functions of the town. He talked about the town bartering with the Durham Fair Association and the Boards approach to funding versus bonding.

Karen Cheyney thanked the Board for all their work on the budget noting it was not an easy task with the cuts from the state and different mandates.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Moncata