

**ADVISORY & FINANCE COMMITTEE
JOINT BUDGET MEETING WITH THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN AND SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
January 5, 2016**

The Board of Selectmen held a meeting on Tuesday, January 5, 2016 and the Advisory & Finance Committee and School Committee were invited for a joint budget meeting. The Advisory & Finance Committee meeting was called to order by Chairman John Moody at 7:28PM. The meeting was conducted in the Little Theater at Plymouth Community Intermediate School, 117 Long Pond Road, Plymouth, Massachusetts.

PRESENT 14 members of the committee were present:

Kevin Canty, Betty Cavacco, Robert Cole, Harry Helm, Shelagh Joyce, Ethan Kusmin, Mike Lincoln, Marcus McGraw, Patricia McPherson, Christopher Merrill, John Moody, Patrick O'Brien, Marc Sirrico, Scott Stephenson

ABSENT 1 member of the committee was absent:

Harry Salerno

- Pledge of Allegiance
- Town Manager's Report
- Board of Selectmen Chair, Ken Tavares, thanked the School Committee for arranging to move the meeting to the PCIS Little Theater because of a furnace break at Town Hall.

Public Comment

- George McKay, Precinct 8 Town Meeting Member, at last BOS meeting there was talk of tax payers on fixed incomes and he wanted to put a face with that comment. He is retired and on a fixed income, his property value also matches up with that of the average taxpayer. Social Security has no increase in cost of living this year so benefit will remain the same this year and the cost of Medicare prescription drugs going up a couple dollars per month.
- Everett Malaguti, Precinct 1, asked if the public will be allowed to speak on any part of the budget? Chairman Tavares answered yes, that the prior budget meeting was informational in nature, tonight is the night where they will entertain questions.
- Robert Spencer, Precinct 1, is also on fixed income. We all know taxes are going up and we are building another school. There has to be some law we can create to help senior citizens with the school budget. Also why can't excise tax be used to repair roads?

7:56PM Budget Portion of Meeting Began

School Budget Presentation & Discussion:

Superintendent Gary Maestas gave a presentation highlighting changes to the school budget. Contracted services account for the largest budget increase. Special education services is a tough budgetary topic, it is a struggle with all of the mandates. 20% of our student population requires special education service. Bus Service is up \$250,000, Building and Grounds is up \$86,000, Water & Sewer are up \$35,000, and Technology is up \$30,000.

Charter School transportation costs \$9,000 more than the amount we are reimbursed plus the school department handles all of the administration for the charter school transportation. Special Ed transportation is up \$45,000. Homeless transportation, McKinney-Vento Act, is up \$213,000. This came into play 8-10 years ago and a slight reimbursement began 2-3 years ago. About 100 students are filing and claiming homelessness. Homeless students may reside in town or out of town and we are responsible for providing transportation to get them to and from school in Plymouth. Regular day transportation reduction is due to proposal to add full day kindergarten so we can cancel mid-day bus runs, saving \$162,000.

Over \$6 million is spent each year on special ed placements (\$15,000-\$300,000 per child per year). The state allows the private schools to increase tuition at whim, sometimes 20% at a time. Circuit breaker reimbursement is not as high as we would like. Out of district placements have gone from over 100 students to 80 students by developing programs and keeping these students in our district.

Addition of Full Day Kindergarten – Cost Increases:

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| Certificated salaries: | Additional \$1.28 million |
| Other salaries: | Additional \$320,000 for para-professionals |
| Contracted services: | Decrease of \$162,000 |

In FY2016, school budget increased 2.1 %

In FY2017, school budget increasing 5.94% with full day kindergarten (4.2% without)

Translates to \$5 million increase with full day kindergarten, \$3.6 million without

Chapter 70 State Aid is the state's contribution from state tax for education. Dollar amount has not increased at same right as expenses have increased. \$24 million projected. Next year in FY2018 we would expect the normal increase of \$200,000 but with the addition of full day kindergarten, we can expect an additional \$800,000, bringing annual Chapter 70 State Aid to \$1 million.

Years ago, utilities were \$3 million for entire district which the schools were able to reduce to \$1.4 million. With the introduction of solar fields we reduced our cost from 14 cents per kilowatt hour then to about 8 cents per kilowatt hour now, and have that rate for the next 18 years.

The School Committee, school finance staff and administrators are here to answer any questions.

Dennis Begley, Chairman of School Committee, hopes everyone had a chance to see the full day kindergarten meetings and understand why it is good for the children of Plymouth and why it is a good idea now with the equity a full day program will provide. If you require any additional detail we can provide that, we are committed to full day kindergarten.

John Mahoney asked what does full day kindergarten does for children and whether the schools are schools set up for this. Gary Maestas answered that full day kindergarten has been in the works for many years. 10 years ago full day kindergarten started at the Oak Street School. DOE later said the facilities were not suitable to continue program there the following year. The School Department looked at reintroducing full day kindergarten on piecemeal basis. They consulted with principals to do space audits, to carve out full day kindergarten classrooms. Principal Blaisdell at Hedge led the charge. There was compelling evidence on how the full day kindergarten students were progressing. We looked at other options like switching computer labs to mobile carts and opening classrooms to full day kindergarten. The Schools added a number of sections of full day kindergarten on a tuition basis, \$4,000 per student on a lottery basis. At this time, all principals are comfortable that they can accommodate full day kindergarten with the exception of Hedge Elementary. Hedge has a population bubble right now so in the first year transportation will be provided to bring those full day kindergarten students to West Elementary. Administrators and School Committee members toured elementary schools one month ago to make sure the classrooms were ready and available.

As far as education benefits, they are significant. Reading is the primary goal for entering the school system. A high majority of full day kindergarteners are entering first grade fluent in reading, which is a major benefit. Not only are they reading but also comprehending, and have word fluency. Those are the educational benefits. Equally as important are the social and emotional growth helped by full day kindergarten.

A question was asked about way Chapter 70 aid will be received in year 2 and not year 1 of full day kindergarten. Dr. Maestas explained that Chapter 70 funding is stable and has increased slightly. In order for us to have the increase for full day kindergarten, our students need to be qualified in the seat students, and the state takes our word October 1 of the second year. Once they validate the numbers the additional \$800,000 Chapter 70 funding will kick in which will cover about half of the cost of the full day program.

Originally it was thought we were going to require structural and curriculum changes and the cost of introducing full day kindergarten would be a lot higher. Now that computers are chromebooks on carts classrooms are opening up so we don't need to add on space, better utilize existing space. The cost is not as high as we worried it would be in the past.

Plymouth is in the minority by not offering full day kindergarten. We are in the 12% of towns in Massachusetts not offering full day kindergarten, 88% offer it.

Public Comment

- Pat McCarthy, Precinct 5 Town Meeting member, said education is responsibility of all of us. People before us paid for the education of our children, we pay for the education of the next generation. Taxpayers have that responsibility to pay for it. We should not be in 12% minority. We should do everything in our power to help our children. She fully supports this initiative as a Town Meeting member, as a tax payer, and as a senior citizen.
- Jeanine Henderson, Precinct 12, has two daughters one in 1st grade and one entering kindergarten in fall. Her daughter blossomed in full day kindergarten last year. She strongly feels that her youngest needs full day kindergarten and will struggle if she does not get it. The town is building new high schools but also needs to support students as they embark on the foundation of their education as well.
- Everett Malaguti, Precinct 1, asked how many students are in full day kindergarten now and out of those, how many are on a voucher system? Principal Blaisdell responded that 160 students are currently in 8 sections (classrooms) of full day kindergarten. They have a tiered tuition system depending on income and a voucher system. 20-27% receive reduced tuition and 2-3 students each year receive vouchers. Malaguti agreed we need to do what is best for our community, but does not see the need for full day for entire population. He believes it is more of a want and not a need. Just because we are in 12% does not mean that we need it. It is the right of the parent to decide, it should not be mandated.
- Patrick Higgins, Precinct 1 and former principal at West Elementary and father of four, shared information he has learned while getting doctorate. Full day kindergarten is paramount to social skill development, not just education skills. Also, the amount invested early lead to savings in long run. If students develop social, academic and cognitive skills they are less likely to be labeled with special ed needs and decrease special ed rates and costs down the road. Learn to read then read to learn. There should be equity across the town. Half day has to cover same curriculum as full day, half day is teacher led, full day is exploration led. Costs don't come close to measuring the benefits of full day kindergarten.
- Steve Lydon, Precinct 12 Town Meeting member, said his daughter went to a full day 3 day kindergarten program and it did help her. He supports full day kindergarten but has an issue with the budget. Every year taxes go up, nuclear plant is going away, we are looking at an expensive roads program, employee contracts go up and they deserve it, we have a great school system but if we continue along this path we are going to price ourselves out of our homes. We need to look at the school side of the budget and the town side of the budget. We need to prioritize and maybe something lower on the list can be cut, we can't have everything.
- Brendan Brady, Precinct 10, says that it is less than 25 cents per capita for full day kindergarten in year one and half of that in year two.
- The Exact dollar amount of implementing full day kindergarten is \$1,444,563. The reimbursement beginning in the second year is \$800,000.

- Robert Spencer, Precinct 1, is ok with full day kindergarten if it is available to everyone, not lottery, not partial, all or none.
- Claire Kelley, resident and retired educator, taught full day kindergarten in a nearby town for 10 years. She is an advocate for full day kindergarten. There are educational expectations from state and districts that really necessitate full day kindergarten, it is not a want it is a need.
- Megan Lacerda, mother of 4 with bachelors in education and masters in reading, said her oldest 2 went to school out of town for full day kindergarten. If a child is not on reading level by age of 8, the chance of ever being on level is slim to none. Half day kindergarten is rushed through to get to all the curriculum. Full day has more time to get through it, has time for exploration plus also receive art, computer lab, and gym which helps fight obesity. People should not have to pay \$4,000 or seek alternatives. This is not a want, it is a need. We should not be in bottom 12%. Her child who is on an IEP can not go out of district to receive those services, he needs full day kindergarten next year.
- Matt Muratore, Precinct 14 here as citizen to support kindergarten, has a passion for this. He is co- owner of a day care center in Kingston and Plymouth. This day care center offers an educational component. As a parent, he can see the difference in children that have gone through full day kindergarten and have not. Reading, writing, emotional, and social development are vastly different in students having gone through full day kindergarten. He never went to kindergarten and was still behind other students in third grade. Let's get out of bottom 12%. Let's get away from haves and have nots and let everyone have.
- Ken Tavares, asked Mr. Muratore as a State Representative and not as parent, if he could share some indication of the climate on Beacon Hill as Cherry Sheets and unfunded liabilities play a large part in our budget. Representative Muratore said that he met with governor this afternoon. The Governor is committed to cities and towns and schools. There will be an increase in Chapter 70 and increase to cities and towns. There will be cuts in other programs. He had a conversation with Plymouth's Director of Finance, Lynne Barrett, earlier and she is right on spot with her forecasting for increases.
- Ken Tavares asked if there was any indication where the cuts will come from. Mr. Muratore said there was nothing specific on that yet, that we should here in the next couple of weeks.
- Shelagh Joyce , Advisory & Finance Committee, asked about the research showing that full day kindergarten pays off in the long run with decreased special ed costs down the road, are there any real numbers behind that? No exact dollar amounts are available but there is plenty of research concluding the same.
- Mrs. Hunt, School Committee, says that we will hear more information from the federal government regarding an early education component, including preschool so we need to make sure we are on track with full day kindergarten before that initiative begins. She also pointed out that earlier a woman mentioned that her child went to full day kindergarten in Carver, and that that money comes out of our budget. Gary Maestas confirmed that students from Plymouth that attend full day kindergarten in Carver and Borne through the school choice option, Plymouth pays for them to attend full day kindergarten there.
- Betty Cavacco, Advisory & Finance Committee, is an advocate for full day kindergarten, asked how much money is taken off our Chapter 70 funds for charter school and what can we do to recoup those funds? Dr. Maestas answered, yes, charter school is funded from Chapter 70 dollars and are automatically funded. 6-7 million comes off Chapter 70, and goes directly to the charter school. Ms. Cavacco asked if the state was supposed to fund charter schools 100%? The state helps them get started in beginning, and phases out over time, placing the burden on local budget which comes from Chapter 70.
- The meeting recessed for 5 minutes, resuming at 9:08PM.
- Chris Merrill, Advisory & Finance Committee, asked if there were any updates regarding the state taskforce working on reformulating Chapter 70, if that might be ready in FY17 or FY18? Dr. Maestas said that they all are watching developments of that, but have not heard anything yet, it may take time. We have desired improvements in circuit breaker reimbursement, McKinney-Vento reimbursement, and Chapter 70 reformulation.

- Dr. Sorenson, School Committee member, works with troubled youth and adolescents. Much trouble in adolescence can be attributed to early age when a student starts with failure and chooses poor peer groups. Not saying full day kindergarten can cure these problems, but if a student gets a good taste in their mouths for education during kindergarten and enjoys education, enjoys peers, and has high self-esteem, they are set up for a better quality for life. The opportunity to have that positive experience at an early age saves them, their parents, and their community down the road.
- Ms. Hunt, found an answer to Ms. Joyce's question, a study conducted in 2013 shows that for every \$1 invested in high quality early childhood education, we save \$7.
- Lynne Barrett, Director of Finance, ran the numbers and the effect of full day kindergarten on the tax rate is 18 cents per thousand in the first year, 8 cents per thousand in the second year.
- There are 2 additional budget areas the Board of Selectmen wishes to discuss, Police and Fire. Then they will discuss other budget areas and then will vote on the budget.

Police Department:

Police Chief, Mike Botieri, said the goal of his department is to respond to emergency and 911 calls in under 3 minutes. In order to do that, they need a certain number of officers on the road at all times. 125 to 130 police officers is the ideal number and Plymouth is at 112 now. He requested 10 and the Town Manager approved 8, with one of those a sergeant.

Kevin Canty, Advisory & Finance member, asked if there is a staffing or training benefit for spreading the addition of Police Officers out over time? The Chief said the reason they are doing that is all economic. They decided to phase it in over a few years. They have added 12 over last several years. He is happy with that and feels supported but says the sooner we get to that 125 to 130, the better off we will be. Mr. Canty asked if full staffing will allow a significant reduction in overtime money needed? The Chief said yes, with 122-123 working and 5-6 out injured or retired, we will see savings in overtime.

Everett Malaguti thought the Street Crimes unit was supposed to be a multi-town effort with the cost burden shared with surrounding communities? No towns have taken up the offer so the taskforce is just focusing on Plymouth issues. The Street Crimes unit was created in response to the heroin epidemic. They have made 300 arrests but more importantly have saved lives. Within 12-24 hours of an overdose, they are visiting those that overdosed with a counselor and are offering a bed in rehab or at least a counselor to meet with. In 2015, police responded to 202 overdoses resulting in 23 deaths. They used Narcan 69 times in 2015 and brought a lot of people back to life.

Mr. Spencer thinks it is fine to add officers but does not believe it is going to save on overtime. He supports the Chief but disagrees on this issue.

Tony Provenzano, Selectman, believes that we need to get these new officers on the force and get them seasoned relatively quickly otherwise we will have security concerns heading into 2020.

Fire Department:

Chief Bradley reported that 3 new firefighters, 1 new mechanic and 1 systems administrator were approved by the Town Manager. These 3 will bring us back to where we were in 2009. Earlier this year, the Fire Department had 7 out on IOD which is the product of doing more work with less people. They are transferring dispatch to police which will free up 4 firefighters.. They hope to chip away at adding more firefighters to reduce response rates to an acceptable rate. Used to have 4 on truck now have 3. Ultimately the town will decide what level of service it wants, the level of service is not acceptable now.

Sean Page, Selectman, stated that we should listen to the chiefs, like education you are investing in something that is needed that we can not skimp on, public safety must be in forefront.

Time to make decision on budget that will go to Advisory & Finance and then to Town Meeting.

Administrative Services Budget: Town Manager recommended and Selectmen approved \$2,215,235

School Budget:

Ken Tavares - had to approach budget where everything being increased was a no and he had to be convinced to make it a yes. Great opportunity with finance committee and school committee in attendance to say that we have to pull together, not work independently of each other. We are going to be losing money from Entergy, Selectmen work daily to find ways to minimize that and to increase revenue, wish could say it was easy and we have it solved but we don't. Schools got him to a yes. We need to be mindful of tax rate and where it is going and what it is doing to residents. We need the schools to promise they will pull back in the next several years. We have approved new schools and now are supporting full day kindergarten so please in next couple budget cycles you have got to hold back. Plymouth has great future but we must be guarded in next years.

Tony Provenzano – Would feel better if it weren't for uncertainty with sewer. Advocate for full day kindergarten, only reservation is uncertainty, would feel better if we had more knowledge about the costs for the sewer.

David Malaguti – Had questions and learned merits of full day kindergarten program, in support. Also agrees we are faced with uncertainty, but is less concerned with Entergy as we have been expecting that. When people say we have to lower taxes they typically look at the town side of the budget and not school side. Schools are going to have to share that burden with us.

John Mahoney – We do not do good job maximizing our investments, look at schools and sewer. For \$1.44 million to get full day kindergarten started and gain \$800,000 aid the next year, significant return on investment here that will return something significant.

Ken Tavares – We are concerned about unfunded liabilities, we need to commit as a committee to stay in touch with Beacon Hill, so much is beyond our control.

School Budget: Town Manager recommended and Selectmen approved: \$90,257,918

Finance Department Budget: Town Manager recommended and Selectmen approved \$2,548,084

Community Resources Budget: Town Manager recommended and Selectmen approved \$3,478,313

Inspectional Services Budget: Town Manager recommended and Selectmen approved \$946,070

Planning & Development Budget: Town Manager recommended and Selectmen approved \$839,987

Public Safety Budget: Town manager recommended \$21,886,305

Malaguti – need to look at new police and new fire, both chiefs need to wait another year, definitely need mechanic, let Chief or Town Manager talk about IT person

Town Manager said the Fire Chief does unbelievable amount of technology work and that he should not take on that level of burden. She would like to see that new position start in January.

Malaguti – Motion to leave in IT and mechanic and cut 3 firefighters and 8 policeman, seconded.

Mahoney - Agree to cut in this area but not to this level, comfortable with 4 police instead of 8, mechanic needed. Won't support this motion.

Tavares - Unfortunately we have to take a look at this area and cut back. Profound respect for these 2 Chiefs. Can not support 8 officers this year. Do support mechanic and administrator, Chief's day should not be burdened with IT work. So many times town side gets budget crunch, we are in this together.

Vote 1-2-1, motion does not carry

Mahoney – Recommend 4 police and mechanic and IT, splitting so Page can vote police portion.

Motion to approve 4 police, seconded. Will work on exact figure.

Page – seconded motion for discussion. Can't put a price on public safety, will only vote for 8 no less.

Vote 2-3-0, motion does not carry

Board would like to make a solid recommendation, will revisit it.

Mahoney – Motion to approve mechanic and IT and 2 firefighters, seconded.

Vote 2-2-1, motion does not carry

This can come back next week for further discussion

Emergency Management Budget: Town Manager recommended and Selectmen approved \$69,900

Parking Enforcement: Town Manager recommended and Selectmen approved \$33,361

Marine & Environmental Budget: Town Manager recommended and Selectmen approved \$1,014,750

Public Works Budget: Town Manager recommended \$6,177,599

Malaguti – Amend to eliminate Building Maintenance supervisory position – subtract \$70,142

Page – Asked about outside contractor for restroom cleaning

Town Manger, Melissa Arrighi, said that the town currently uses outside contractor for public restrooms and in some cases uses lifeguards(non-union seasonal). The town is looking to have a professional company at those locations and to include the exterior restrooms at the new town hall, not including any restrooms currently being cleaned by staff. Page said he can't support a \$73,000 increase to clean restrooms.

Supervisory position – In favor of eliminating, unanimous

Restrooms – Page made motion to decrease \$73,000 from contract for restrooms, and use last year's number of \$27,000. The Town Manager cautioned that we will not have services to clean those restrooms mentioned.

Ken Tavares ask that the entire Public Works budget be tabled until next week, motion passed.

Fixed Costs Budget: Town Manager recommended and Selectmen approved \$54,969,130

Debt Budget: Town Manager recommended and Selectmen approved \$14,077,523

Enterprise Fund Budgets: Town Manager recommended and Selectmen approved \$13,895,840

Will come back on public works and police and fire at next meeting.

Thanks to School Committee and Finance Committee, Selectmen will continue with its agenda.

ADJOURNMENT **Kevin Canty made a motion to adjourn. Patrick O'Brien, second. The motion for adjournment carries unanimously (13-0-0).**
The meeting adjourned at 10:15PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kere Gillette

Not in attendance, minutes prepared by review of video