

**MINUTES
TOWN OF PEMBROKE
BUDGET COMMITTEE
Thursday, January 29, 2009**

Members Present: David Freeman-Woolpert, Chair; Mark LePage, Vice Chair; Gerry Fleury; Ray Foss; Stacey Sheldon; Bruce Kurinskas; Charles Connor; Mike Connor; Tom Serafin, School Board Rep.; Tina Courtemanche, Alt. Selectmen Rep.

Others Present: David Jodoin, Town Administrator; Michael Reardon, Headmaster, Pembroke Academy; Julie Heon, Curriculum Director, Pembroke Academy

The meeting began at 7:00 PM.

Documents Distributed: *Updated* 2009 Town Meeting Warrant as of 1/29/2009; Pembroke Academy NECAP 2007/2008 Performance Comparisons

A motion to approve the minutes of January 22, 2009 as amended was made by Ray, seconded by Mark, and passed by unanimous vote.

David Jodoin presented updated information on Warrant Article 5 - Capital Reserve Funds - Revaluation Update Capital Reserve Fund which the Selectmen have increased from the proposed \$10,000 to \$140,000 due to a possible expenditure in 2009 to cover a required revaluation every five years.

With this larger amount added to the proposed budget as well as taking into consideration lower fuel costs and more library costs, the proposed Town Budget's portion of the tax rate would increase from \$5.69 to \$6.31 per thousand for a total increase of \$.62. After a discussion of the impact of the revaluation this summer, including lowering the Estimated Assessed Valuation figure below the figure originally used in the Selectmen's budget, it was decided to leave the Valuation figure as is. Dave F-W cautioned that if there is a substantial drop in the total assessed valuation on properties, the tax rate would increase considerably. Gerry Fleury pointed out that this might not necessarily increase a homeowner's tax bill.

The exact figure for the county tax rate is still not available. Dave F-W agreed to contact a member of Delegation in an attempt to get more information.

The committee reviewed warrant articles 6, 7, 8 and 9 dealing with the proposed mandatory recycling program and the truck that would need to be purchased. Regarding some language within the article dealing with the user fees for the collection carts, Mr. Jodoin stated that it has already been reviewed by the NH DRA. The selectmen will be holding public hearings pertaining to the recycling warrant articles on February 2nd, February 7th and February 17th. The majority of the committee was not in favor of recommending these articles for approval at this time and it was suggested that the selectmen prepare a back-up Warrant Article 9 for Town Meeting in the event these articles are voted down.

Tom Serafin requested that Mr. Reardon and Ms. Heon be permitted to speak regarding adding funds to the Pembroke Academy budget to hire one additional math teacher. Tom stated that this request has not been discussed by the School Board yet and is for informational purposes only at this time. Mr. Reardon stated that a large amount of freshmen entering P.A. are unprepared for Algebra. In recent years the school has used a teacher who is primarily a Chemistry teacher to help teach math but next year that teacher will be needed for Chemistry classes only due to a new requirement that all students study Chemistry.

Mr. Reardon explained that should an additional Math teacher not be obtained, P.A. will not be able to sustain the steady improvements of math scores that have been made over the past several years. Ms. Heon pointed out that 32% of incoming freshmen last year did not pass their respective math classes due primarily to class size and unprepared students. Hiring an additional teacher would benefit not only remedial students but advanced students as well.

Tom stated that the additional funds to add one math teacher would cost approximately \$50,000-\$60,000. He also stated that the School Board is scheduled to meet February 10th but may call an emergency meeting to enable them to prepare a formal proposal. Some questions raised by the committee related to classroom space, teacher/student ratio, support services and the alternative high school. Tom responded that he would prefer to discuss any related issues once the School Board has had the opportunity to meet and prepare a formal proposal which should be available by the next budget committee meeting scheduled for February 5th.

The total appropriations for the school budget were reviewed. Several members questioned the need for an increase of 5% over the current year's level and a question was raised regarding how much of this increase is due to teacher contracts, healthcare or new initiatives. Tom stated that a large percentage of the increase is due to salaries but he will have more solid numbers by the next budget meeting.

Some aspects of the new initiative for the alternative high school were discussed. Mr. Reardon and Ms. Heon each gave brief overviews of the program and stated that this program is necessary to ensure that all Pembroke students are successful. The new program will focus on freshmen but is intended to identify those students who are most likely to drop out after they turn 16. With the new law requiring students to stay in school until the age of 18, it is important to identify these "at risk" students as soon as they enter Pembroke Academy.

Estimated tuition revenue and the tuition split between towns were briefly discussed. It was stated that should expenses at Pembroke Academy increase, tuition revenue would increase as well due to tuition fees being increased for the sending towns. There was some concern expressed by committee members regarding the overall increase in the school district's revenue and the impact to the tax rate should there be any cuts to the revenue i.e., Adequate Education Grant and Catastrophic Aid. Dave F-W reminded the committee that they need to focus on appropriations and the tax rate for the overall budget. He requested comments on portions of the appropriations they feel should be adjusted and the tax rate that is a result of the overall budget.

A request was made for a breakout and summary of appropriations increases compartmentalized by major category. For this reason, it was suggested that a revised MS27 be prepared showing budgeted increases in appropriations over the current school year.

Ray Foss reminded the committee that the detailed breakdown of the Library funds (\$5,000) that were added back into the budget for computer expansion has not been received from the Library staff. Mr. Jodoin will follow up.

The next budget meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 5, 2009.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.