

MINUTES
TOWN OF PEMBROKE
BUDGET COMMITTEE
Thursday, January 8, 2009

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

The meeting began at 7:00 PM.

David F-W stated that he is in a receipt of an e-mail from Rose Galligan requesting that \$3,500 for a concrete pad around the Pavilion at Memorial Field be restored to the municipal budget. This will be discussed later.

Documents Distributed: 2009/2010 School District Proposed Budget; Summary of Budgets, Tax Rates for Property Tax Year 2008; 1999-2006 Pembroke Academy Historical Reading and Math Test Scores; Fall 2007 – Beginning of Grade 11 NECAP Reading, Math and Writing Test Scores; Drop Out Rate, New Hampshire/Pembroke Academy; Pembroke Academy – Phased-in Alternative High School Program

After two minor changes were made, a motion to approve the minutes of December 18, 2008 as amended was made by Ray, seconded by Mike, and passed by unanimous vote.

Fred stated that the \$5,000 for computer expansion that had previously been removed from the Library's budget has been restored to their budget. In reply to Ray's question, Fred indicated that Library's budget has not yet been reformatted to break out what the computer expansion funds will be used for but he will follow up.

Dave F-W distributed copies of two budget summary spreadsheets used last budget season. Since most committee members wished to use both formats now or during the public meeting, Dave agreed to prepare and distribute one of these spreadsheets before the next meeting and Charlie will do the same for the other.

Tom introduced for the School Budget discussion: Peter Warburton, Superintendent of Schools; Mike Reardon, Headmaster, PA; Deb Bulkley, Principal, TRS; John Burnham, Facilities Director; and School Board Representatives Roy Weisiger, Clint Hanson, and Tammy Boucher.

Peter Warburton outlined recent positive events or achievements within the School District, such as a grant to fund 100 new laptops, and the implementation of a Literacy and Numeracy Task Force and an on-line learning program. Mr. Warburton stated that the district's biggest challenge is keeping all students at all schools engaged in learning. He is especially concerned that beginning in July, 2009, all children will be required by law to be in school until the age of 18.

Estimated revenues versus appropriations were discussed as well as the tax rate forecast for the School portion of the tax rate. Mr. Warburton stated that revenues for the current school year are at or above their expectation. There was some question as to the substantial increase in the proposed budget for the Adequate Education Grant and Catastrophic Aid. Mr. Warburton will confirm the figures and report back to the Committee. As presented, the School District's tax rate will decrease by \$.72 if the proposed budget is adopted.

In response to a question, it was determined that the Assessed Valuation in the Town and School budgets is the same. Mr. Warburton will confirm the calculation that uses a different valuation (without utility lines).

Possible uses for future funding from the Federal and State governments due to the hoped for Federal Economic Stimulus Package were discussed.

Major areas of increase were reviewed including salaries which are expected to increase \$187,407. This item was questioned by the Committee since a larger increase was expected at the time the current three year contract was approved by the voters. Tom will verify the numbers and report back to the Committee.

Population within the school district was briefly discussed. It was stated that there has been a gradual reduction at PA and TRS, and there is a significant increase in the amount of first grade students.

John Burnham gave an overview of the current status of the Honeywell project. He indicated that Phase 1 is almost complete and they are proposing going into Phase 2 which may feature installation of a wood chip heating system for both PA and TRS. One expense they will incur in 2009 that is not covered by Honeywell funding is for the removal of oil tanks from Hill and Village Schools for an approximate amount of \$30,000. Additionally, Mr. Burnham updated the Committee on the recent fire and water damage at Pembroke Academy.

Mike Reardon gave a detailed presentation on Pembroke Academy's accomplishments as well as expected challenges. He reviewed increases in PA's state test scores and college acceptance rates as well as a decrease in the drop-out rate. Mr. Reardon described the proposed program to educate children who currently have dropped out but will be required to remain in school until the age of 18. This features a three year phased-in Alternative High School Program. He indicated that Phase 1 and 2 of the program are sustainable should the Phase 3 portion of the project not be realized due to its high expense. This expense might be offset by lower Special Education costs so that the total impact to the School budget may be acceptable.

Additionally, Mr. Reardon outlined PA's remedial program (RTI) which aids Middle School students in preparing for high school and the PLATO program that offers on-line courses to students for credit recovery.

The potential future need for an additional police officer in the schools was briefly discussed as well as the amount of time the current officer is spending at each school. Tom will obtain more information and report back to the Committee.

Mr. Reardon discussed tuition-based students and indicated that the population at PA has decreased by approximately 50 students. He agreed to provide more information about the budgeted increase in tuition revenue at a future meeting.

With an actual decrease in the tax rate for Schools requested for the coming school year, the School representatives were asked to consider setting aside substantial funds this coming year (causing a slight tax increase) to use the following year when economic conditions may cause a substantial decrease in State funding. Tom will follow up and report back to the Committee.

A brief discussion on projected fuel costs was discussed. Tom will have further information at the next meeting.

A decrease in special education costs was discussed as well as a requested increase in secretarial support during the summer.

The next budget meeting is scheduled for January 15, 2009.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 PM.