

Brattleboro Town

Finance Committee

Minutes

November 27, 2012

4:30 PM

SB Meeting

Room

Present: Committee members Lisa Lorimer, Michael Bosworth, Kathryn Turnas (5 PM), Spoon Agave (Chair)

Absent: Committee members Tim Cuthbertson, John Wilmerding (recused)

Others: Margaret Atkinson, Town School Board (Chair); Bob Woodworth, BUHS School Board (Chair),

Jim Kane, Business Administrator, Town and BUHS school districts

1. Call to order: 4:30 PM

2. Agenda Review: Schools; Income Sensitivity Program study

3. Minutes Approval: none

4. Announcements: none

5: Schools : General discussion

Town schools budget increase now reduced to 2.65% but a few changes still expected, Possible addition to staff

Town schools plan showing \$269,000 capital improvements over next 5 yrs

BUHS budget projected now at minimal .26% increase

BUHS capital plan showing \$654,000 expenditures over 5 yrs; capital plans being redone now

Reserves - BUHS about 2 million; Town schools about \$600,000

Budgets kept down by early retirements. Two more years of such impact.

New contract only two years, not three. Small salary increases mitigated by adding "steps"

Current top salary is \$69,000 (30 yrs, MA plus 30 credits); poor economy induces teachers to work more years

State statute requires surplus to be returned to taxpayers unless voted to place in reserves or to spend

Kane not sure how much Boards will ask to have held in reserve. Maybe all. No final decision

\$30-40,000 health cost increase at BUHS; Town schools have \$20,000 increase

Over recent years annual costs incurred from federal mandates have increased from \$400,000 to 7 million

Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) should be minimal this year, probably not more than 2 cents on state tax rate

Grant from US Forest Service payed for studies of woodchip conversion. Academy conversion to woodchips underway. If it works other elementary schools will be studied

Solar energy discussed. Schools studying plan recommended by Town Energy Committee that

would contract with private company to build and supply solar power. Contractor would bill schools for power until installations were paid off.

Enrollment currently slightly higher. Enrollment not major cost driver, but rather the level of

services required by students. Poverty/low income students show correlation with greater needs

Thus a lower student population doesn't always translate to lower budgets

\$800,000 bond reduction windfall will require voter approval to spend

6. Income Sensitivity Program discussion: (very brief, not much time left in meeting). Lorimer

showed her study, still a work in progress, comparing similar programs in all New England states.

Vermont exceedingly more generous Circuit Breaker (or equivalent) than others. VT max

benefit \$8,000. Closest is CT at \$1,250. Needs closer look.

7. Adjourn: 6:30 PM