

Brattleboro Representative Town Meeting Finance Committee
Maple View Conference Room, Brattleboro Memorial Hospital
Thursday, December 7, 2017
5:30 p.m.

Present: Scott Smyth, Abbe Sweeney, Avery Schwenk, Franz Reichsman, Ralph Meira

The meeting was called to order at 5:34. The agenda was reviewed.

Minutes of the October 26 and November 1 meetings were approved.

Act 46 wrap up

- The merger was voted down and it is not clear what will happen.
- At RTM, we will report what we did.
- We will know by July 1 about what the state Board of Education will choose for Brattleboro.

Budget process reviews - Highlights

Municipal budget

- Draft budget and narrative/notes are available at the town website.
- The administration is proposing the addition of an HR professional, which was discussed at the last RTM.
- Selectboard meetings have taken place to talk about revenues and then go through each department
- There has been extensive discussion about the aerial ladder truck. We didn't get a \$950K grant from FEMA as hoped. A used, 24 years old has been purchased for \$35K, instead of spending twice that to repair our old one, which might reveal other problems. Proposal from the administration: take \$500K of the fund balance and \$500K through bonding to buy a new truck, but the Selectboard is reluctant to add any new debt. Possible middle path: Use the new/old truck for an additional year or two, with a backup plan to rent a ladder truck (? \$5000/month, same as bond cost) if it fails.
- Timetable of Municipal Budget: Has to all be done by first week of February, but that really means by late January. The select board has gone through the entire budget by now, and will be reviewing key areas again at meetings in January.

Brattleboro Town School District budget

- Issued evening of 12/6 for first time; to be approved in March
- Will again be reviewed on 12/20
- Board will vote on it on 1/3 – which is also the same night as the public information meeting
- Problem: all the talk so far has been about spending (proposed to rise by 3%), but not about revenue because we don't have the equalized pupils number yet and can't know the impact on taxes. The equalized pupil number must be released by 12/15. Until next week, we won't know the tax implications of the budget.

- **We should ask:** How much of the budget is predetermined by state and federal mandates, and how much discretionary latitude does the Board have?
- The proposed capital budget contains one big item: need to replace the modular structure for pre-K at Academy School with an addition. This accounts for \$640K out of a capital budget of \$882K.
- To the extent needed, we can spend fund balance to stabilize the tax rate. This is best done for capital budget items rather than for financing regular operations.
- There is one new staff position in budget this year: roughly \$100K, including benefits.

BUHS budget

- Will be presented to voters at the budget meeting on 2/13/18. The draft has already been considered by the BUHS finance committee and presented to the full board.
- There will be a public information meeting on 12/18 with an anticipated vote by the board.
- The draft budget for FY19 shows little overall change in a \$25M budget. It will be 0.1% higher than current. No calculation of tax impact has yet been possible without equalized pupil numbers, which also determines the amounts of grants received. So, again, the revenue side is unknown.
- Our target for a report should be around 2/1.

WSESU budget

Has been approved by the board. The SU has no taxing authority and obtains its revenue by passing its assessments on the its constituent school boards.

Update on plans for the Municipal Building

- There is no finalized lease with the State yet. We will revisit in early January.

Review work flow and meeting dates

- January 4, 2018: Next regularly scheduled meeting
- Action: Invite Peter Elwell.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55.