



Town of Harvard
Finance Committee
Minutes for January 29, 2020

Location: Upper Town Hall Meeting Room - 13 Ayer Rd

Present: Don Ludwig (chair), John Seeley, Mark Buell, Jennifer Finch

Absent: Richard Fellows, Ray Marchica, Siko Sikochi

Others: Tim Bragan - Town Administrator

Don Ludwig (chair) called the meeting to order at 7:03pm

Minutes for approval:

Minutes of Jan 4, 2020 pending.

Minutes of Jan 8, 2020 pending.

Minutes of Jan 22, 2020 pending. Jennifer to follow up on all.

Public Commentary: None

Town Administrator's report: Tim Bragan:

John/Don/Jennifer/Mark all would like the current state of budgets with revenue projections together.

- The Select Board is likely to approve the trash bags for seniors.
- Financial warrant articles are due Jan 31.
- BOH Irene Condon - trash haulers enforcement cost would be \$2000 not \$1875.
- Nashoba BOH - %5 increase as expected.
- Charlie Waite field: Small warrant article, Tim Kilhart (DPW Director) sent it to P&R - estimate for electric line \$7200.
- Find out Feb 10th - higher range for insurance. 7%?

Other business:

The school department was invited to come answer any additional questions about their budget: Aziz Aghayev the School Business Manager and Linda Dwight the Superintendent were present along with School Committee members John Ruark (chair) and SusanMary Redinger. These comments are not verbatim.

John Seeley (JS): Why was the School Business Manager increased from .4FTE to .6FTE?

Linda Dwight (LD): Aziz has been doing procurement and the schools require someone with a School Business Managers Certificate.

Jennifer Finch (JF): How are the vans that were purchased last year working out?

LD: ¾ are working, one is not working and is going to be donated.

JS: What are they used for?

LD: Sports, competitions for clubs, field trips, we keep a long and they are used nearly daily.

JS: Are enrollments projected to rise?

LD: Between the new homes at Devens, the second preschool classroom, the new condos off of Stow Road, yes.

JF: There is a nurse listed under Bridges, was there not one before and if not why has that changed?

LD: There is only one there now because of a student that needs a nurse present. There is not usually a nurse at Bridges.

LD: A number of questions submitted were based on mid-year changes. Those changes were brought up in public sessions.

Don Ludwig (DL): We compare last year's budget to this year's budget.

LD: We thought the liaison would inform you.

JF: This budget is not sustainable, how can we help you to stay at 2.5% or below?

LD: Raises are 80% of our increases. That will take us over that, it's unsustainable.

JF: No other town employees received a raise above the COLA of 1.7%.

LD: The teachers are getting 2% contractually, it's already decided. The school has never matched the town's COLA.

JS: You used 25% more in offsets than in prior years, is this what you wanted to do?

LD: we're expecting more students, and more students from Devens.

Aziz Aghayev (AA): Circuit Breaker also went up.

JF: Last year you returned \$300,000 back to the Devens fund, are there cuts you could make?

JR: We do not anticipate \$300k going back. We would like better actuals.

LD: We are very transparent as to what's in there.

Mark Buell (MB): I question your priorities on keeping mac products over keeping staff.

JF: You are continuing with the Lease-to-Buy program starting this FY? There was a presentation by Chris Boyle to the School Committee, would you send it to me?

LD: Yes, it was not in public session, I will send it.

LD: We have guessed at a savings of \$60k-\$80k/annually to switch. There would be difficulty changing and having multiple platforms at the same time. The School Committee has talked about it. We have already trained staff, and the students are already comfortable with the devices, and we are confident they will last more than 5 years. We're hoping to have the students keep the same laptop from 8th grade to graduation, and maybe purchase it after that if we can do that. I believe the Town gets first dibs.

Tim Bragan (TB): The town does not use Apple.

JF: In the FY19 School budget narrative you stated that "This decision to lease/return devices is based on the short lifespan of devices and to avoid the recycling of outdated equipment."

LD: The students are taking better care of them.

AA: When leased, they are owned by the leasing company, and we have to fix every scratch and dent.

LD: and it takes time to pack them up and ship them back.

JF: When looking last night at what platform schools require for incoming freshmen, they were pretty evenly split between macs and PC/Chromebooks. They really only recommend not having an old device. Macs are only 5% of the market share in K-12 schools across the nation.

SusanMary Redinger (SMR): From 2008-2012 you started projecting needing an override. The HTA's model is over 2.5% and we can only negate that by using the Devens fund.

DL: Our charge is to avoid an override.

MB: What is the average class size?

LD: In HES it's 4 classes per grade, in TBS it's anywhere from 12-21, classes are self selected, so generally divide each grade by 5.

Supporting Document 1: Email from Lori Bolasevich and notes from Hilltop Securities regarding debt ceiling policy draft. **VOTE:** After some discussion on edits Jennifer moved to accept the "Debt Management Policy" as amended, Mark seconded, vote passed unanimously. (4:0) This will still need approval from the Select Board.

Document 2: Finance Committee Spotlight Draft from Council on Aging (COA) regarding Hildreth House Phase 2.

One edit needed: It cannot be an emergency shelter, but it can be a warming/cooling center.

Approximate cost on the average tax bill is about \$167/year. Looking at a 20 year loan.

Document 3: Current list for dept's requests over level service.

Fire/EMT: Needs benefits added as cost, but position is the key ask.

Fire Time: No discussion

BoH: Trash Enforcement. Amount dependent on other towns. \$1875

Land Use: GIS Licence and/or training.

P&R: \$16,936 - need to review.

Dpw: \$23,520 paper disposal, \$5k for bags for seniors.

JS: Trash is down 40%, but recycling isn't up.

DL: Please create a schools list to go with overages list. Need finalized list for next week.

Liaison Reports: None

Future agenda items:

- There are 3 weeks left before the budget is due to the Select Board. We may need to meet on a Saturday, either 15th or 22nd.
- Financial Warrants at next meeting.
- Divvy up book assignments.
- Discuss current dept's requests over level service.
- The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) will be at our next meeting to present their supported projects.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 8:43pm

Supporting documents (3 Total):

1. Email from Lori Bolasevich and notes from Hilltop Securities regarding debt ceiling policy draft.
2. Finance Committee Spotlight Draft from Council on Aging (COA) regarding Hildreth House Phase 2.
3. Current list for dept's requests over level service.

Upcoming meetings:

Feb 5, 2020 7pm Upper Town Hall Meeting Room

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Finch