

MEETING DATE:
MEETING PLACE:

Monday March 12, 2018
Town Campus - Room A

Board of Finance

Budget Workshop

Meeting Minutes

Chair Fitzgerald called the Budget Working Session of the Board of Finance to order at 6:00p.m.

Present:

Board of Finance: Jean Fitzgerald, Bennett Pudlin, Mark Casparino, Kevin Kranzler, Judith Friedman, Ken Kaminsky

Others:

Beth Crowley, E.C. Scranton Library Director, Members of the Friends of the E.C. Scranton Library, other citizens, Stacy Nobitz, Director of Finance

- Review of Potential Uses of the Undesignated Fund Balance
- Discussion of the Board of Selectmen 2018-2019 Recommended Budget
 - Review of BOS Adjustments to the 2018-2019 Requested Budget
 - **Moved by:** Mr. Pudlin and seconded by Ms. Friedman to modify the Board of Selectmen recommended reduction of \$300,000 to \$200,000 in the 2018-2019 Board of Finance Recommended Budget for Library Operating Expenses due to the Library moving to a temporary location during construction of the Library addition.
 - **Vote:** The motion was denied 2-4
- Approval of the 2018-2019 Board of Education Recommended Budget of \$58,103,711
 - **Moved by:** Mr. Kaminsky and seconded by Mr. Pudlin to approve the Board of Education Recommended Budget of \$58,103,711
 - **Vote:** The motion was approved unanimously
- Approval of the 2018-2019 Board of Selectmen Recommended Budget of \$24,963,490
 - **Moved by:** Mr. Kranzler and seconded by Mr. Kaminsky to approve the 2018-2019 Board of Selectmen Town Recommended Budget of \$24,963,490
 - **Vote:** The motion was approved unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Dear Members of the Board of Finance,

Thank you for allowing us the time to meet with you tonight to discuss the revised budget we submitted to the Town on February 22nd as well as the additional reduction approved by the Board of Selectmen. As I know you have a lot to consider, and much time has already been spent discussing this issue, I will be brief in my comments. However, my trustees and I are here tonight to provide any further clarification or answer any questions you may have.

After consideration of the comments made by members of the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance, we carefully reviewed our budget request for next year and made additional reductions totaling \$86,709 for an overall reduction of \$100,000 or a 7.9% decrease from the current year's operating budget. This also represents a 10% decrease in our operating budget from FY2016-17.

The specific areas of reduction, as well as our plan for continuity of services during the library construction period, are outlined in detail in the revised budget narrative you have received. This revised budget is the largest reduction we can make and still provide a quality level of library service that Madison residents are asking from us while we are in a temporary location.

The original plan for continuity of library service during the construction period was developed by me, and approved by the Library's 20 member board of trustees, based on requests from our current patrons as well as the experiences of my colleagues who have operated out of temporary locations during construction projects.

- The **Westbrook Library** moved to a 4,000 square foot space near the marina. They operated the same number of hours and with the same number of staff as usual. Library usage dropped a bit but nothing catastrophic. In fact boaters from the marina started coming in, patrons they had not served before, who then continued to use the new library once it reopened.
- The **Guilford Library** moved into a 24,000 square foot warehouse space on Goose Lane approximately 3 miles from the library. They operated the same number of hours and with the same number of staff as usual. They still offered programs including 90% of the children's programs and added some new offerings for adults.

- The **Branford Library** moved to an old car dealership located on Route 1 near the highway and experienced increased traffic at the library. The library did not cut staff or hours.
- At the **Ridgefield Library** they moved to a storefront and actually expanded hours in response to patron requests. The only jobs that were eliminated were some of the high school-aged page positions. The staff was kept busy with serving the public – even though half the collection was in storage – there was still robust circulation. The Library also continued to do programming – finding other locations throughout the community for program venues.
- The **North Haven Library** moved to a smaller space. They did not cut staff or hours but did increase outreach even providing storytime at McDonalds. The Director said the staff became a much more cohesive team while working in a smaller space.

I have also provided for you a chart of the services we can offer if our revised budget is restored by the Board of Finance. I have included examples of both a typical weekly schedule for staff on-site as well as a weekly and monthly breakdown of the library programs we will offer. We have commitments from, and are starting to book space at, the Madison Senior Center, Madison Public Schools, Madison Arts Barn, Temple Beth Tikvah, Bauer Park, and Life Full Yoga Studio.

While I understand there may be doubts about the level of traffic we will see at the temporary space, it is important to remember that library information services are provided both in-person and remotely via telephone and email. No matter how information requests are received, staff needs to be available to answer these questions in a timely manner. If more residents do decide to call or email rather than come in person, it makes it more important to have additional staff available to handle these requests while other staff are helping patrons who come in. Also, many residents who work or are in school during business hours need to be able to visit or call us in the evenings or on weekends. This is why our current service hours provide access beyond the normal business day or week. This need will not change while we are in a temporary location.

The temporary location at Madison Earth Care puts the Library on the main route north for many of our commuters. As we will move the drive-up book drop to the this location we can expect to see, as the Durham Library currently does, an increase in patrons returning materials to us on their way to work. This includes materials borrowed from other libraries. This increase requires we have adequate staff to efficiently process these materials and get them back to their owning libraries.

We also are hearing that folks who live in North Madison are excited about having library service closer to where they live. We anticipate, much like Westbrook saw, an increase in new library users. This may lead to a future satellite library in this area. This location will be a wonderful opportunity to test the viability of this concept but only if the hours and level of service remain close to what we currently offer in our downtown location.

Finally, the right-hand side of the chart I have provided shows the reductions in services we will be forced to make if the Board of Selectmen's approved budget is upheld by the Board of Finance. These reductions are severe and unnecessary. They would limit access to information for those residents who cannot visit or call us during business or school hours. This is not the level of service our residents requested from us prior to the referendum nor is it the level of service they have been asking from us since.

I know the suggestion has been made that we should consider furloughs rather than lay off employees. Unlike manufacturing companies or schools who can save significant amounts by furloughing employees for just a few days, we don't have the depth of staff to make this a realistic option. For example, our two-week payroll amount for salaries is \$33,000. In order to achieve a \$200,000 cut all employees, including me would need to take twelve weeks of unpaid leave.

In my 20 years of library experience, 11 at a managerial level, I have never presented a budget that would waste taxpayer dollars and I have not done so now. I am confident we will be providing a high-level of library service during the construction period and meeting the needs of our residents even beyond what they themselves may imagine we can do. And in providing this service our staff will be fully engaged and productive allowing my management team and me to focus on building the permanent future library the Madison voters approved.

Respectfully Submitted,
Beth Crowley
Scranton Memorial Library, Director

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