



Natick Finance Committee

Pursuant to Chapter 40, Section 3 of the Town of Natick By-Laws, I attest that the attached copy is the approved copy of the minutes for the following meeting:

Town of Natick Finance Committee

Meeting Date: March 15, 2018

The minutes were approved through the following action:

Motion:	Approval (as amended)
Made by:	Mr. Hayes
Seconded by:	Ms. Collins
Vote:	11 - 0 - 0
Date:	4/24/18

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Evans

Secretary

Natick Finance Committee

NATICK FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

March 15, 2018

Natick Town Hall

School Committee Meeting Room 3rd Floor

This meeting has been properly posted as required by law.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Patrick Hayes, Chairperson
Cathleen Collins, Vice-Chairman
Bruce Evans, Clerk
David Coffey, Member
Robert McCauley, Member
Philip Rooney, Member
Jim A. Scurlock, Member
Kristine Van Amsterdam, Member
Daniel Sullivan, Member
Linda Wollschlager, Member
Jerry Pierce, Member
David Gallo, Member

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Michael Linehan, Member
Dirk Coburn, Member
Cathy Coughlin, Member

AGENDA:

1. Public Concerns/Comments
2. Town Administrator's FY2018 Budget – Public Hearing
 - a. Keefe Tech FY '19 Budget
4. 2018 Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles – Public Hearing
 - a. Article 29 – Amend Natick Zoning By-Laws: Inclusionary Affordable Housing Requirement
 - b. Article 30 – Amendments to the Town of Natick Zoning By-Law and Zoning Map
 - c. Article 31 – Amend Zoning By-Laws: Signage (Residential Zoning Districts)
4. Adjourn

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Chairman Hayes

ANNOUNCEMENTS/CITIZENS CONCERNS:

Christine Weithman, Resident, Precinct 5, former Finance Committee member.

In full transparency, I am on the Steering Committee for the Your Town Your Schools Ballot Question Committee. I'd like to make a couple of points related to the questions on the ballot. As many of you may know and also members of the public who are watching this meeting, the town recently mailed a brochure on the Charter ballot questions. The public may not realize that the town is obligated to share this information in advance of the election so that the public may vote on the Charter questions. They may not even realize that, from time to time, the town looks at the Charter so it's not common that we have these ballot questions. Some in the public have already been asking why questions 1 is not included and they may not understand that the town is not allowed to spend public funds on debt exclusion override communications that would infer an possibility of having people think that they would be asking people to lean one way or the other. I want to thank the Finance Committee for your support of bringing the debt exclusion question to Town Meeting so that Town Meeting could vote in the affirmative and then allow the voters to deal with this question on March 27th. Question 1 is written very specifically to meet the Mass General Law guidelines around override language and does not provide any explanation of the question nor does it have any monetary funds associated with it which could also cause confusion and many towns actually see that happen when they have overrides. Although the Question 1 override is more expensive than other school and building projects we've had the town will be receiving from the school building authority 37% reimbursement for the overall cost which is significant for town voters whereas the alternative which will be almost equally costly don't have the opportunity to receive that state funding and will provide an inferior product for our students. The town also has a record of outstanding oversight of town building projects all of the schools and the community center and that continues now and will go into any building and planning for the future. I support the project and ask that town voters give it their consideration for question 1 on March 27th. Thank you.

Mr. Coffey: I wanted to commend the DPW for the excellent job they did this past few days – a record amount of snowfall and they did an excellent job getting the town back on its feet and I just felt it should be recorded here at least. They did a good job under trying circumstances and I wanted to thank them for a job well done.

Town Administrator's FY2018 Budget – Public Hearing

MOTION

Move to open the Town Administrator's FY2018 Budget – Public Hearing

Moved/Motioned by:	Mr. Evans
Seconded by:	Ms. Collins
Motions or Debates:	None.
Vote:	12-0-0

Keefe Tech

Presenters: Jonathan Evans, Superintendent and Dolores Sharek, Director of Finance

As of October 1, 2017, overall enrollment is 729 students from our 5 member towns, an increase of 13 students. Natick had an increase of 7 students from 65 to 72, a 10.8% increase. This is the highest point we've had from Natick since FY12. Our School Committee has had a public hearing on the budget and we have a unanimous vote from them to go forward with our final request for an operating budget in the amount of \$19,115,750.37. That represents an increase of 2.76% so we've had a nearly 1% decrease in our preliminary to our final budget over FY18. We've worked hard to offset the assessments to our member towns, so while there's an increase of our overall operating budget of 2.76% through these efforts, Chapter 70 and our local offsets we have an aggregate increase for our member towns of only 0.9% over FY18 for what we'll be asking from all of our member towns.

Areas of Efficiency:

- We've aggressively negotiated and received a 0% percent increase in our budget for health insurance.
- We found some money within our over \$700,000 transportation budget, and small amounts from a variety of other accounts. The total amount of reductions we found from our preliminary budget is \$172,852.33.
- In terms of our assessments offsets beyond our Chapter 70 and regional transportation reimbursements we can apply our interest on investment income \$5,000, we would like to use \$200,000 in Excess and Deficiency, Medicaid Reimbursement we received \$45,000 which we will apply directly into the assessments, and also we've had an increase in out-of-district participation. We had five students this year from out of the area of our member towns and the income we generated we will apply directly to the assessment of \$74,996 so that \$324,996 is what we are able to apply to offset the assessment which helped us get to that 0.9% increase overall.

So for the Town of Natick I'm going from 65 to 72 students from FY18 to FY19 it represents a 10.8% increase in enrollment and for the assessment for the Town of Natick when all of the math comes together and we look at minimum contributions and the enrollment that follows there's an 11.7% increase or \$167,073 increase from FY18. The assessment request we have for FY19 for the Town of Natick is \$1,594,984 so I did want to demonstrate that through the offsets that although there is a significant increase in enrollment it's nearly linear with the 10.8% enrollment increase and the 11.7% assessment increase.

The binder that we provided you just to provide the information for what's included – we have a listing of the accounts in the front, in the next tab we have the actual final budget which includes all line items in the final budget. I'd like to point out that, after the blue tab, in the third section there is a page for major increases. In this document, we've identified areas that had a cost increase that exceeded \$30,000. Health insurance is one of them. Although it was a 0% increase, we put in several percent in case some staff members decide to go onto our plan, we would owe 75% of the cost of that so we needed to have funds available for that possibility. We have one new position this year that is in Legal and Protective Services. That is a successful new career and technical area and in its third year we will have 9th graders and 11th graders together – with good enrollment we need a second instructor for that program. There are salary increases and also funds for our District Network and for the expense of that \$40,000 we are able to realize \$120,000 in services through e-rate so we thought that was a sound investment as well. When you look at those total increases in those five areas you see a total of \$496,103 and

the entire overall budget increase is \$513,310 so we hope that demonstrates to you that we try to be prudent and responsible in the other areas of our budget. The last area to present to you follows the orange tab and toward the back of your binder – that is a listing of the municipal costs that we incur as a regional school district. Certainly the Town of Natick pays for these items for your school systems but those items are normally on the town side for non-regional school systems. So that \$2.7 million dollars within our overall budget actually include health insurance and other areas of our budget that often exist within the town side of a traditional public school budget.

Ms. Collins – Education Sub-Committee Report:

Three of the four members of the Education Sub-Committee attended each of their meetings. There are a couple of things I want you to keep in mind. One is that for those who haven't gone through a vocational school budget before there are costs that are considered shared costs between town and school in the Natick budget that totals 14% of their total budget. Somewhere around 65% of Keefe students are in free or reduced student lunch programs and almost half have some level of IEP which requires additional resources to deal with. Even given that, their graduation statistics and MCAS reviews are impressive by any standard. They are adding a position in Legal and Protective Services because of the popularity of the program. They are phasing out Business Technology because that program is not popular. Part of the assessment can be controlled by the budget and part of the assessment is determined on Beacon Hill and is based on the "wealth of the community." Compared to some of the other schools in this district, Natick is considered "wealthier" and therefore has to pay a bigger share. Personally speaking I think it's exciting that more Natick students are taking advantage of this. And the sub-committee did vote 3-0-0 to support the higher number with the understanding that they were going to do some final work so we didn't have any outstanding questions.

Questions:

Mr. Sullivan: Current enrollment is 729 students - what do you believe is a comfortable capacity for the facility.

Mr. Evans: : We have determined that with our current staffing and academic areas we could accommodate approximately 250 students coming into a class – if you multiply that number out you'd be at the 860 area. The way it works in a career and technical school, as much as we're receptive to students, if we have a junior move out of town, we don't always fill the seat that they leave behind so there is some attrition over time. We have students from a lot of different places that do some moving around so if ever we were to get and keep a class of 215, our academic staff could accommodate them. Having said that, if we found ourselves in the fortunate situation of having more, then that many students available that we could serve, I would love to come to you with an increase in academic staff to accommodate those students, because the building could hold more students. So if we maxed out all of our career and technical areas which also is impractical for every student in every seat in every program we'd be close to 1,000 students and we could physically fit within the building but in order to get beyond the 215 in a class we would need some additional academic staff.

Mr. Sullivan: In reference to our out of district enrollment, is that 5 students total?

Mr. Evans: Yes.

Mr. Sullivan: So at \$75,000 that breaks down to about a \$15,000 per student average which is dramatically different than what I town might receive in a school choice program. Can you give a little bit of context as to why?

Mr. Evans: That may be the justification for a community not to be participating in school choice to be honest. In terms of that figure – our number is actually about

\$16,700 and the math doesn't quite work out because we have one student leave mid-year but started on October 1 so we discontinued the billing of that student. So that is the cost also the non-member town who sends that student is responsible for transportation – that is a number set by **DESI** it is based in the foundation budget calculations and it is fairly similar to what other career and technical schools would find. If you do the long division of the Natick request, you'll find that you're paying a decent amount of money per student and to take one in at \$5,000 I don't think would be a popular choice with our member communities.

Mr. Sullivan: So just that I'm clear, that \$16,000 + tuition gets paid by the school district?

Mr. Evans: Yes. Whereas our request for Natick would be from the town – I realize it's all together – but out of district it's paid from the school.

Mr. Scurlock: You have 17 programs currently?

Mr. Evans: We have 16 we're phasing out Business Technology.

Mr. Scurlock: There must be a minimum cost to get a program up and running is there some optimal number, do you feel you're program number that makes sense at this point or would you drop one to add one?

Mr. Evans: I feel confident in the selections that we currently have.

MOTION

Move favorable action for the Keefe Tech Budget amount of \$19,115,750.37 with an assessment to the Town of Natick of \$1,594,984 from Tax Levy

Moved/Motioned by:	Ms. Collins
Seconded by:	Mr. Sullivan
Motions or Debates:	<p>Ms. Collins: I think it's one of the biggest secrets in this town the great education you can get at Keefe Tech – I'd ask your support for this amount.</p> <p>Mr. Sullivan: It goes without saying your presentations are always very informative – you don't wait for us to ask questions before you answer them. Thank you again for another great presentation.</p> <p>Mr. Evans: I met two people who were Keefe Tech grads over the last weekend one is a graduate who is continuing his education in college and one went into the HVAC trade and they were extremely well adjusted and very articulate and certainly great citizens for this town.</p> <p>Mr. Coffey: Thank you for another excellent presentation. I look forward to endorsing this budget.</p> <p>Mr. Pierce: It wouldn't be right if I didn't extend my accolades to Keefe Tech. Having had two kids that went through the program there I can attest that you have the best interest of the students there. Something that you don't mention frequently is the athletic program that you have – my kids participated in them quite a bit and they are wonderful. Your kids also seem to have a sense of comradeship with each other and I think that's wonderful – so thank you for all that you do for the kids.</p>
Vote: Carried	12-0-0

MOTION

Move to open the Natick Finance Committee 2018 Spring Annual Town Meeting
Warrant Articles – Public Hearing

Moved/Motioned by:	Ms. Collins
Seconded by:	Ms. Evans
Motions or Debates:	None
Vote: Carried	12-0-0

Article 31 – Amend Zoning By-Laws: Signage (Residential Zoning Districts)
Sponsored by the Planning Board

Presenter, Terri Evans, Planning Board Member

The motion that you received in the questionnaire was voted unanimously by the Planning Board. This is a clean-up article relating to signage in residential districts. There are some non-residential uses permitted. For the most part, the current zoning By-Laws are silent on how signage should be treated in residential areas and it’s left to the Building Commissioner to apply his better judgement of what is a standard of reasonableness. So this simply adds language to that. Ms. Evans reads the changes from the motion. The Building Commissioner was relieved to have a By-Law to guide him rather than having to make the decisions on a case by case basis.

Questions

Ms. Collins: What about pre-existing, non-conforming signs and signs that are there by variance.

Ms. Evans: When asked about that, the Building Commissioner said he would use the standard that we’re creating as the standard that may be appropriate unless a decision specifically dictated dimensions of the sign.

Ms. Collins: Do we leave ourselves open to someone who is familiar with the Warrant appealing such a decision and putting up a monstrous sign because they are not permitted by special permit or Dover?

Ms. Evans: The Building Commissioner did not think so. He said this gives him a standard that defines the limits.

Ms. Collins: Did we seek anything from Town Counsel?

Ms. Evans: He’s reading it now, but we haven’t received feedback yet.

Ms. Wollschlager: Do you have a sense when talking to the Building Commissioner how many existing signs might not comply with what’s suggested here?

Ms. Evans: As he says in a number of cases they may be a couple of square feet larger, nothing that worried him particularly.

Ms. Wollschlager: Do you know how many instances?

Ms. Evans: No.

Ms. Wollschlager: So it could be five or fifty?

Ms. Evans: That could be out of compliance with what’s proposed here? We actually didn’t talk specific numbers. There are relatively few properties that are affected by this bylaw change.

Ms. Wollschlager: Is it possible we will not hear from Town Counsel by the close date?

Mr. Hayes: It’s possible.

Mr. Rooney: Can this come back for reconsideration?

Mr. Hayes: Yes

MOTION

Move to recommend favorable action on Article 31 – Amend Zoning By-Laws: Signage (Residential Zoning Districts) document date of 3/14/2018

Moved/Motioned by:	Mr. Evans
Seconded by:	Ms. Van Amsterdam
Motions or Debates:	<p>Mr. Evans: This has been vetted by the Planning Board and the Building Commissioner and I think it’s well thought out and I’m comfortable we will get something favorable back from Town Counsel – I’d rather dismiss it right now.</p> <p>Ms. Van Amsterdam: I’m comfortable voting it this evening.</p> <p>Ms. Wollschlager: I think in the past what we’ve done is even if we think there’s a chance we might reconsider we vote favorable action and have something on the floor for Town Meeting to discuss so that we’ll have something in the recommendation book and I trust that the Chair will add some of our comments about this discussion in the book so that Town Meeting is aware that we have some concerns potentially that might be addressed by Town Counsel. So I would urge the members to approve favorable action and if we haven’t heard anything from Town Counsel 48 hours in advance any one of us can ask the Chair for reconsideration.</p> <p>Mr. Coffey: I think we should vote this now and reconsider later if there is an issue.</p>
Vote: Carried	10-2-0

MOTION

Move to postpone action on Article 31 – Amend Zoning By-Laws: Signage (Residential Zoning Districts) document date of 3/14/2018 until April 24, 2018 to give Town Counsel time to review the Article.

Moved/Motioned by:	Ms. Collins
Seconded by:	Mr. McCauley
Motions or Debates:	<p>Ms. Collins: I think enshrining this in our By-Laws is important I’m not arguing that. If Town Counsel believes that the Building Commissioner can reliably and legally enforce what’s written here even in those cases of variance and pre-existing, non-conforming then I’m fine. I just want to understand what the risks to the town are because I don’t want to set up a situation where we make this change that creates legal costs for us.</p> <p>Mr. McCauley: I wonder if this is a solution in search of a real problem but I agree with Ms. Collins that Town Counsel should review this.</p>
Vote: Not Carried	2-9-1

Article 29 – Amend Natick Zoning By-Laws: Inclusionary Affordable Housing Requirement

Not heard.

Article 30 – Amendments to the Town of Natick Zoning By-Law and Zoning Map

Not heard.

MOTION

Move to close the 2018 Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles – Public Hearing

Moved/Motioned by:	Ms. Collins
Seconded by:	Mr. Evans
Motions or Debates:	None.
Vote:	12-0-0

Mr. Hayes: Can I get a hands vote of those who think they can definitely be here next Tuesday night – If Town Hall is open and the school administration is willing to be here we will have a meeting.

Ms. Collins: Tuesday night is the school budget I will be sending out in the next 24 hours the presentations that the school administration presented to the School Committee: Technology, Student Services and Technology – you will not get the full number until Tuesday morning because the School Committee takes it up Monday night.

OLD BUSINESS

MEETING MINUTES

ADJOURN

MOTION

Motion to adjourn.

Moved/Motioned by:	Mr. Pierce
Seconded by:	Ms. Collins
Motions or Debates:	None
Vote	12-0-0

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.