



CITY OF DOVER

## CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

Meeting Type: Workshop Meeting  
Meeting Location: Council Chambers - 288 Central Avenue, Dover, NH 03820  
Meeting Date: **Wednesday, May 2, 2007**  
Meeting Time: **WORKSHOP following Special Meeting**

**6:30 PM**

### **1. BUDGET DISCUSSION:**

#### **A. SCHOOL**

The Mayor called the budget workshop session to order at 8:16 PM

The Mayor wanted to clarify about Scott's query of last week that it was about page 72 of the CIP booklet, also page 30 of the budget book and why the city debt number and school debt number don't add up and why it does not balance; the Mayor explained about the number on page 30 and how the numbers really do balance and explained that the city department debt also the school department debt and how the user fees play into the equation that are all correct.

Scott gave the total amount of debt service that the average person has and the Mayor disagreed saying that the large corporations play into this amount as well. The city manager says for the average residential home which is assessed at \$259,000, the debt service total is \$156 increase on the average tax bill and the increase on the average tax bill is a total of \$400. plus. Scott doubts this.

The Mayor moved onto the schools for a discussion as the school board is looking for direction tonight even though it will not be a binding vote. He reminded the council they have bottom line authority only. He opened this up to the floor.

Keays commented he will offer a figure as he has been through this budget and has come to the conclusion that we can cut between \$500,000 and \$700,000 out of the school budget. Scott concurs with Keays as he sees the enrollment has only gone up very little; he is also concerned with the Nottingham and Barrington students that will have a high school of their own very soon so we should be careful with adding any staffing.

Keays says it is very evident that the other councilors don't have much to say about this but he has read it and sees there are 4 or 5 new teachers for a total salary increase of \$275,000 salary. He noted they did away with a janitor and this must be the lowest position they could do away with. He thinks \$300,000 could easily be cut as we are living in a very tight economy; property is not moving, people are being laid off but yet the school department increased their budget by 2 million dollars. He stated he has watched the meetings and there was a discussion on the different courses at the high school and he thinks some of these courses could be done away with. When he went to high school you had to study. The school department has to realize we just can't keep cutting the city budget. Until we can bring the school department in line we will have an increase every year. He appreciates what the school department did for him back when he was in school. He urged them to bring it down to where it should be.

Trefethen stated like Keays he will look out for his constituents in his ward. When he thinks back to last year when several cuts were proposed most people were against them. That is in stark contrast to this year. There was very little email and most of it was against the cuts being proposed. There are a couple of different ways to look at this data; you can



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say the taxpayers are pretty much in agreement or the other way is they don't care. His conclusion is the people of his ward are in support of the school budget and he will vote for what they want.

Turner admires Keays but does not think it is possible with their contract negotiations alone that they could not do this cut. The Mayor reminded them they are only in workshop session and can propose what ever they want.

Hindle asked if the school board can go back to review their budget to see what sort of reductions would occur if they asked them to reduce their budget by \$300,000 or \$500,000.

Dr. O'Connor says time is of the essence right now, and by State law they must follow guidelines and have to notify staff of any layoffs by May 11<sup>th</sup>. This would be a real challenge for them. He will put together a plan if it is the council's wish and present it to the school board in emergency session. Hindle is thinking of \$200,000 - \$300,000 in reduction as the school board has always done yeomen's job with the budget. He suggested the \$300,000 cut.

DeDe says after the Joint Fiscal Committee Meeting that took place when the city's objectives were layed out and subsequent to that was the approach that was taken that was what the city had wanted. He thinks the school board has done its work. There is a 56% increase in what the school will be putting into the retirement system. He is satisfied that the school board has done its work and he does not feel this reduction is appropriate.

Keays wants to suggest some figures. With Barrington and Nottingham we have close to 600 tuition students; without them we would have a total of 1100 students and could eliminate some of our teachers. It is the taxpayers of Dover that are maintaining that school. Dr. O'Connor confirmed we received \$9,000 per student from these 600 students. Keays has talked to the taxpayers of Ward 1 and many of them are having to put their houses for sale or get a reverse mortgage; this is not right. If you cut the city budget, you have to cut the schools. Discussion ensued and he will vote no.

The Mayor asked Dr. O'Connor to comment on the tuition rates. Dr. O'Connor says there is a formula used for the state that these students provide their own transportation and they do formulate building maintenance into the fees. Also special ed is in their payroll.

Scott does not like to say that we are playing Santa Claus to Barrington and Nottingham but he thinks we should get our over head back. Dr. O'Connor clarified we charged \$9700 for Barrington and Nottingham was slightly less. Scott says it should be more as there are no alternatives. Dr. O'Connor disagrees. Scott asked what is the number of people on the staff that leave each year. Dr. O'Connor says maybe 15 to 20 and our population is not going down. If and when Barrington decides they will be building a high school then they will look at attrition. Hindle asked about the Governor's plan and if we cut \$250,000 would that be reimbursed. Dr. O'Connor says that is no guarantee. Hindle says we are at the states peril on the amount of money that we will receive. Dr. O'Connor says the money in the current budget is guaranteed. Dr. O'Connor echoed what DeDe had said earlier. The increase in the budget is based on contractual obligations. They were all negotiated contracts that came before the board. This is a 0% growth budget. He continued it is .04% increase outside of the contracts.



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The Mayor commented on the \$425,000 that we moved out of fund balance saying he was the only person on the council opposed. When it finally passed this was funds the school had not expended as yet and the council chose to reallocate it. The Mayor wanted a budget amendment and the reason is it would have showed up in last year's tax bill but it did not. Now this year's increase is \$425,000 that we have to make up plus last years. It was not funded correctly last year. The city manager has an allocation in his budget the for the 3 city contracts that have not been settled. Also there was a \$400,000 increase in the retirement this year; this is why we fight in Concord to get new legislation passed. Also the adequacy funding was not what was expected. He is not saying we should anticipate more money coming in though. Also part of this debt is \$500,000 for the SAU to move the school department to the McConnell Center which is all part of the big picture and is the reason we may not need a whole new Police station. The Mayor concluded he is supportive of this portion of debt knowing where the city needs to come in putting a number out there and hoping we can agree would be about not to exceed \$200,000 and that he could support.

Trefethen followed up on the tuition students we are looking at 7 years. Dr. O'Connor says there are 8 years remaining on the contract. Since this is so far away he does not recommend we start planning for this pullout.

DeDe says it is not politically correct to support a budget as presented but he knows how hard the school board has worked on it. He asked what the \$200,000 does to the tax rate and the city manager says 3 cents. So he will support the budget as it stands.

Keays has listened to the councilors and how the constituents support the school board. He has taken the average age in his ward and 2/3 of them say that they would like to see a cut in taxes. He thinks he lives in a Ward that people never made big money that is except for Ward 3. How do we cut this; he asked Dr. O'Connor how many new students we had this year. Dr. O'Connor says about 75 and he wants to hire 5 new teachers. Dr O'Connor says they were looking to hire 2.5 new people and they are adding but also subtracting at the same time. He listed the new teachers. Again Keays thinks his ward does not make the big bucks.

Turner is looking at the bottom line and their increase is a 7.1% increase. He would like to second the target of 6.4% if \$200,000 was removed from the budget.

Cheney thanked the school board as they have worked very hard and she added that she has two children in the system. She thinks the high school is a warm and welcoming place. She would support maybe a \$200,000 or \$300,000 reduction.

Dr. O'Connor wants to recap that this is a wide consensus. The Mayor does not think it would help to take a vote, he thinks there is a 4 vote for a \$200,000 reduction. Turner wants to start at \$500,000 and work down.

Ciotti thinks the school board has done a fantastic job; he thinks maybe \$200,000 – \$300,000 could be cut. Every year it comes down to this, but education is expensive. Dr. O'Connor does not think we should base the reduction on adequacy funding.



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### B. GENERAL GOVERNMENT - CONTINUED

The Mayor wants to move on to General Government with two things; we received a 9.3% decrease in health insurance rates and the rates came back with a 0.3% increase; we will reduce \$280,000 from insurance adjustments right there. He will incorporate this into the new resolution. He cautioned them to remember the responsibilities of the planning staff with the review of the Master Plan going on. The other item is the library with the full time position being cut.

Hindle asked about hiring 1 or 2 new firefighters for the new station. He wants the council to remember they can look at reprogramming this money.

The city manager stated he will skip Police, Community Services and Fire Departments tonight. Hindle says the last thing we addressed is tax assessing.

So starting on page 169 of the budget book with Planning, Joyal pointed out the most significant thing is the reduction in the CDBG money. He is proposing to eliminate one part time planner thus the allocation to put this back with the savings in health insurance. Scott asked about the impact fees as his constituents want to know about them. The city manager sent them out to the council previously; Scott stated he didn't get them. The city manager says \$3195. per dwelling unit for impact fees goes into a facilities fund; there are other impact fees the city can charge but there is also an elaborate analyses in place. Scott asked if all the development at Week's Crossing had to pay impact fees. The city manager confirmed this is correct because they are not putting anyone in the schools.

Trefethen asked about the Inspection Division of the Planning office saying a couple of years ago we expanded to have a full time plumbing inspector and added a part time health officer. His question is with the amount of building going on in the city can the inspection staff keep up with this and continue to do the background tasks of fences and decks. Are we keeping up with the true enforcement issues. The city manager says we do have difficulty in keeping up as we receive numerous complaints. Tom Clark, building inspector is here and confirmed that things do suffer such as complaints on sign issues, fences and our fees are pretty much self-funded. Trefethen wondered if they add another inspector would that increase the fees. The city manager says this could be one approach also you could use the fees to control growth. Trefethen mentioned the storm drains and ponds and the building in these areas where the inspection department needs to be involved and this will continue to be a growing issue.

Keays asked about page 175 where we have a plumbing and health inspector and also a separate plumbing inspector. The city manager explained the history behind this and how the plumbing and health inspections were combined. Now the plumbing inspector only provides backup to the health inspector.

Keays says we must live with it.

The Mayor asked about the CDBG cut of a planner position and the addition of \$25,000 in the planning budget. There were no other questions on Planning or Building Inspection or CDBG.



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Scott asked on page 179, line 4110 about the \$90,000 and the combination of the two positions; the city manager clarified this is a grant funded position which the city manager listed what the percentages of the 3 positions are.

### C. Recreation

The city manager wants to do recreation department on page 321; the city manager says generally the additions to this budget are due to the move from the Butterfield Gym to the McConnell Center as he has asked Gary Bannon to be the building manager and there is a McConnell Recreation Center added to the budget.

There are no real significant changes in programs and services. Cheney asked the city manager to review this again. The city manager says we are in transition right now. Hindle asked if it would be possible for the city manager to give an update on the contractual services at the McConnell Center. Also Hindle wants a list of contracted services for ball fields in contrast to ball fields that are serviced internally.

Scott asked about the Severino money.

The city manager says it is not something Gary is responsible for; it is a capital account and in the CIP not the budget book.

Scott wants a list of the allocations for Severino.

The city manager stated he will be having this report soon.

Ciotti asked about page 373 line 4120 temporary employees with the overtime pay that has doubled. The city manager says this is a reflection of reality and the part time people at the arena.

Trefethen asked on page 321 and 323 the item for the McConnell Center is there a section where this is more detailed. The city manager says on page 353 it is broken down more. The city manager is very concerned about the situation at the Arena and needs the council to address this; he will be putting out an RFP to contract the arena out as well as the Jenny Thompson pool but it may not be in time for the budget adoption. We cannot continue to run it as is and even with raising the rates significantly there is no cushion in this budget even with one of the groups that stepped up and donated a zamboni.

Scott asked on page 323 clothing and supplies is \$600,000 and this is a 22% increase if you total all the supply accounts. The city manager again explained he moved the Recreation Department to the McConnell Center so he is not comparing apples to apples; the detail is on page 251. Discussion ensued.

Trefethen asked on page 330 line 4591 Special Programs the proposed budget is \$13,000 how does it compare to the Third Street Senior Center. Gary says it used to be \$10,000 but they increased it to \$15,000. Trefethen asked about the programs that will be run by the Recreation department; Gary confirmed this subsidizes these items.

Trefethen asked about the senior trips that are taken, Gary says he is hoping to have this be self funding by paying for staff out of the funds charged for the trips. Trefethen would like a summary of the services provided in the senior program.

Gary confirmed the senior center was a huge success.



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Keays wants to know why there is such an increase on page 323 in the Arena Fund. The city manager says this is for seasonal staff. Keays wants to know how much it costs us in the summer to chill the ice and also the winter as well.

The Mayor says we need to finish the Human Services and the Library Departments first.

Trefethen says his understanding is a lot of people from out of town use the arena. Gary says about half. Why do we not increase the ice time for the out of town folks.

Discussion ensued about the cash deficit at the arena and the arena in general.

The city manager says it was originally \$4.6 million in debt; we may have \$3 million debt left remaining. The city manager reiterated the issue of making the arena pay and there is still the issue of diminishing return.

**Public Library** – Joyal began on page 379 the most significant change is the proposed change of the laying off a Library 2 position. This is not a scare tactic. Because of seniority rules it just so happens it is the librarian in the Children's room and this will have an impact on services. He is sensitive to the fact that a real person will lose their position with the city. The other item is the damage repairs and the estimate is for a patch at \$7,000. But the book budget is about the same as last year.

The Mayor asked for a general trend on what we have spent over the last 5 years. The Mayor asked about her buying power. Cathy Beaudoin, Library Director came forward and stated she did not increase her budget for books this year. She is comfortable she can use her overdue book fine money to buy books. Hindle asked how many folks are left in the old contract. Cathy says they are about half and half now. She is at \$1,000 for over time instead of \$10,000 where they started a few years ago. Hindle asked how are the patron numbers on Sundays. Cathy says we are in general increasing 1000 every year on Sundays. Cathy stated Sunday is one of their busiest days of the week. Cheney asked about background checks. The city manager confirmed this and stated how much these cost. She then mentioned the volunteer program and to see if some of them may fit into some of these positions. The city manager confirmed we do provide background checks for these folks as well. She wondered how many applications are on file for the volunteers.

**Human Services** - The city manager says there is not much significance in this budget. There has been a slight adjustment in General Assistance, they are projecting a 2% decrease, staffing remains the same and they are now located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the McConnell Center with Community Action. Also they are being provided a case worker from the State that will come in and work with them a few days a week.

Scott stated on page 395, line 4835 grant subsidy why do we ask our taxpayers to support this. The city manager says this is not funded, what is funded is the community action program that is an important partner to provide services to folks in needs that we cannot provide. One example is the food pantry. Janet Poulin thinks this will be an offset this year.

