



CITY OF DOVER

JOINT FISCAL COMMITTEE - MINUTES

Meeting Type: Regular Meeting
Meeting Location: Council Chambers, City Hall
Meeting Date: **Wednesday, February 10, 2010**
Meeting Time: **5:30 PM**

Present: Mayor Myers, Deputy Mayor Trefethen, Councilor Carrier, Councilor Cheney, Councilor Cruikshank, Councilor Garrison, Councilor Hooper, Councilor Nedelka, Councilor Weston, School Board Chairperson Carolyn Mebert, School Board Vice Chairperson Audra Lurvey, School Board Secretary Beth Setear, and School Board Members Kenneth Appel, Doris Grady, and Robert McCrory.

Absent: Matt Mayberry.

Also present: City Manager Joyal, City Attorney Krans, and City Clerk Lavertu, Superintendent O'Connor.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Myers discussed the new format for the Joint Fiscal Committee, which included all the members of both the City Council and the School Board. The Agenda was put together jointly, and the Chair of the meeting will alternate between the Mayor and the School Board Chairperson.

2. GENERAL BUDGET DISCUSSION

Mr. Appel started a discussion regarding deferring expenses.

Deputy Mayor Trefethen said there was no alternative if they were going to adhere to the tax cap ordinance.

Ms. Mebert said they can't hold the children back because we can't get the books. She said they have mandates to follow.

Ms. Grady asked if the Council felt they were going to work with the spending cap figure or whether the Council felt they would have to override it, because knowing ahead of time will make it easier to work on the school's side of the budget.

Mayor Myers said the Council asked the City Manager for a budget that met the parameters of the tax cap, along with a separate sheet itemizing projects that were left out of the budget.

Mr. Appel said every time he gets a letter from a parent asking him not to cut something from the budget, he tells that person to write to their Councilor telling them to override the tax cap.

Ms. Grady referred to a letter she received from the Department of Human and Health Services, where it stated they are cutting their budget \$9.5 million next year. She said that equals 585 children that will not be getting assistance.

Councilor Weston discussed her research on the economics in Dover, and felt no one could afford to pay another penny on their taxes. She discussed the Fact Finding Report Resolution coming up on the Council's Agenda, which included raises for the School Department.

Ms. Mebert said the tax burden for the State of New Hampshire is much lower than neighboring New England states. She said the problem is that it's all property tax and places the burden on the homeowner. She felt an override of the tax cap would not be a violation of the trust of the taxpayers, because the taxpayers haven't been out there with their vote putting trust in them, referring to the 17% voter turnout on the vote for the tax cap.

Ms. Hooper appealed to the citizens for their ideas.

Mr. McCrory asked about personnel and how the City is approaching it. He asked if the City was considering raises and hiring freezes this year.



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Mayor Myers discussed the current contracts that the City has with the 7 City unions. He said there are no COLA raises in the contracts, and the current fiscal year had no step increases. They cut positions last year, and have cut approximately 15 or 18 full-time positions in the last six years.

Mr. McCrory said the School Board is planning on step increases and raises. He felt that not filling the vacant positions was an opportunity to save money.

Ms. Mebert said another big issue was class size, and that not filling the vacant positions will only increase class sizes.

3. DISCUSSION RELATING TO \$350K REVENUE ADJUSTMENT TO SCHOOL BUDGET FY 2010

Ms. Mebert said she didn't feel the School Board should adjust their budget by the \$350,000, and felt the Council had no right to reduce their budget. She referred to the City Council minutes, and said she felt the Council didn't understand the effect it was going to have on the School's budget.

Ms. Hooper referred to her time on the School Board, and said that she felt what the Council did was illegal. She said she posed the question to two attorneys at the Municipal Workshop last Saturday, and both of them said it was legal and the Council had the right to do it.

Ms. Mebert said she would like some guarantee that it won't happen again, because the School Board needs to plan adequately. She wanted to see more team behavior.

Mayor Myers said he went to great lengths to make sure the Council knew what they were voting on in those Minutes, and he actually voted against it, because he felt it was deficit budgeting. He noted that the School received \$800,000 in stimulus funding, which meant in the aggregate the City was receiving more money from the State than the previous year, but it all went to the School.

Ms. Grady said that vote is what split the City Council and School Board.

Mr. Appel said they have to define emergency, and he felt there were in an emergency.

Councilor Nedelka said they were partners, and when the State makes a shift they have to face it together.

4. PLANNING/EFFICIENCY TOPICS INVOLVING CITY & SCHOOLS

A. SIDEWALK AVAILABILITY FOR STUDENT WALKERS VS. BUSSING

Deputy Mayor Trefethen started discussions on the need for sidewalks within the walking limits to school, which would cut down on bussing.

Ms. Setear discussed the need for plowing the sidewalks in time for children walking to school.

Councilor Weston mentioned that people have talked with her about the possibility of paying for bussing.

B. EXPANDING REGIONALIZATION OF CLASSES BEYOND VOCATIONAL, i.e. LATIN OR ADVANCED/AP MATH



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Deputy Mayor Trefethen started discussions on the expansion of regionalization of classes. Ms. Grady said within 5 years dramatic changes will happen in the school system, and 200 children will be taught by the same teacher in their schools, allowing for more than one school to be contributing to the costs.

C. DISCUSS APPROACH TO SCHOOL CIP, SPECIFICALLY THE DHS PROJECT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Mayor Myers started discussions about the vision for school projects, and to have community participation, which also included the Towns of Barrington and Nottingham for the high school project.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Grady referred to the Fiscal Policy Committee, and asked the Council to consider adding another representative from the School to make it more equal. Mayor Myers discussed the makeup of the committee: two Councilors, one School Board member, two members of the public with strong financial backgrounds, the Finance Director, and the City Manager. He said the committee was created to look at the financial health of the City.

6. ADJOURN

Mayor Myers said they would be meeting again in about two months.
Meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.