

Name of Committee: Override Study Committee

Meeting Date: January 22nd, 2018

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: Room 103, Town Hall

Members Present:

Ben Franco, Select Board	x	Meggan Levene, Resident	x
Heather Hamilton, Select Board	x	Harold Petersen, Resident	x
Julie Schreiner-Oldham, School Committee	x	Jeff Rudolph, Resident	x
Betsy DeWitt, Resident	x	Michael Sandman, Advisory Committee	x

Staff Present: Mary Ellen Dunn, Deputy Superintendent; Austin Faison, Assistant Town Administrator

Elected Officials Present: Beth Jackson Stram, School Committee; David Pollak, School Committee; Neil Wishinsky, Select Board Chair

Topic: Approval of Minutes

Minutes were held for the next meeting.

Topic: Presentation by the School Committee on the School’s Budget Situation

Mary Ellen Dunn made a presentation on the current state of the School Department’s Budget ([Presentation](#)). It was noted that this presentation doesn’t take into account changes to the GIC and updated state aid. Michael Sandman asked about the circuit breaker reimbursement from the previous year. Mary Ellen explained that the work was done for the correct amount, but the state reimbursed at a lower rate (without warning). Betsy explained that the legislature drives the circuit breaker reimbursement percentage. Michael then noted that the contractual increases significantly outweigh enrollment growth increases. Harold Petersen asked how the OSC explains to the community a 3.7% salary increase in FY19 in the schools. Mary Ellen explained that this was the shift in salaries due to steps, education level, and cost of living adjustments. Beth Jackson Stram explained that revenue increases used to cover salary increases. Michael noted that paraprofessionals were included in wage increases due to community demand.

There was a group discussion of the transportation for BHS students from South Brookline. Ben Franco noted that this has been a longstanding issue; to which Mary Ellen explained that there are two new administrators, a very vocal student group that had the ear of PTAC (Public Transit Advisory Committee), and video evidence of overcrowding that has been making the rounds.

Harold asked what number the schools want for a three year override. Mary Ellen explained that the number has reduced since the fall, but the department was still looking

at \$11.4 million. The School Department was going to have the GFOA Smarter School Budgeting come in to train members of the department.

Michael said that the proposed cuts in the potential cuts presented by Mary Ellen only added up to \$3.5 million, when there was a deficit of \$4.9 million. Mary Ellen explained that the group is still working to get to a balanced budget. Harold followed up, asking about the 10 positions that would be added regardless of cuts. Beth posited that the school department wanted the positions included, but they could be on the table if completely necessary to bridge the gap. Neil Wishinsky asked about critical new investments and a prioritization of wants versus needs. Ben inquired about the matrix and the figures that have changed. Mary Ellen expanded that both items and amounts have changed in the matrix.

Neil noted that the OSC should be focused on the overall budget ask, not the revenue amounts. Beth explained that there is difficulty in the preparation of two budgets by the School Department. Michael asked if a one year override could be a solution (so more research could be done for additional years). Beth responded that it wasn't good for employee psychology and morale, and Harold expanded that it should be a three year override. Ben noted that \$11.4 million is the highest override in the history of the Town.

Topic: Discussion and Possible Votes on Capacity to Pay Recommendations

Harold presented his report on the Town's capacity to pay (Presentation). Harold discussed the interest rate the Town assumes in calculations. There was a group discussion about the tax rate percentage in different scenarios. The group used a calculation tool made by Jeff and Harold (an Excel based tax bill impact spreadsheet). Ben noted that there is a belief that there is a capacity to pay, but more of a question of a willingness to pay.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm