

Meeting Date: March 5, 2008

Called to Order: 5:00 PM

Members Present: John Hanold, Jeff Singleton, Lynn Reynolds and Marge Levenson

BOS Present: Pat Allen, Patricia Pruitt and Allen Ross

Others Present: Frank Abbondanzio (Town Administrator), Carolyn Olsen (Town Accountant), Michael Sweeney (Airport Manager), Frank Sokolosky, Gary Collins, Brian Carroll, Peter Golrick, Mark Fairbrother (Airport Commissioners), Ken Rocke (GMRSD Superintendent), Lynn Bassett (GMRSD Director of Business), Jeff Kenney (Principal of TFHS/GFMS), Chip Wood (Director of Teaching & Learning, Principal of Sheffield), Marty Espinola Valeria Smith, Mary Kociela, Terry Lapachinski, Joyce Phillips, (GMRSD School Committee), Tupper Brown and Paul Nowill (Gill Fin Comm), Lee Stevens (Gill BOS), Tracy Rogers and Phil Madden (Town of Gill)

Minutes:

Moved: To approve the minutes of February 27, 2008.

Vote: 7 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Airport Budget Hearing (600-482)

5:05 – 5:30 PM

- The Airport Commission submitted a revised budget request with a net decrease of \$2,333 from the original FY09 request.
- The new FY09 budget request includes the following changes from FY08:
 - \$3,202 in wages to bring the Airport Manager in line with increases granted other town employees since the Airport Manager was hired. The Airport Manager's hourly rate has been unchanged since he was hired on November 3, 2003.
 - The recommended 15% increase for electricity and grounds repair & maintenance.
 - A decrease of \$3,300 in snow removal services to reflect recent actual costs. This account will need to be increased again when the runway project is completed.
 - The new budget request totals \$50,687. This is an increase of \$1,077 from the FY08 budget (2.17%).
- The airport is statutorily independent from the town and therefore has its own insurance policies. The town's policies specifically exclude the airport.
- The airport is maintaining the \$23,000 amount of funding from taxation. The remaining \$27,687 will be raised from Airport user fees. Any additional Airport User Fees received will become part of the Retained Earnings.
- A lot of potential revenue is directly tied to runway expansion.

GMRSD Budget Hearing (300)

6:00-6: PM

- Mr. Rocke presented the FY09 budget for GMRSD with Mr. Wood, Mr. Kenney, and Ms. Bassett.
- The handout with the Powerpoint presentation and budget sheets is filed with minutes and information is not repeated here.
- Mr. Wood shared the striking impact of his five years as principal. At the beginning, all elementary schools were meeting goals and there was no under-performing because there were adequate resources. That first year was the year that 26 teachers were cut from budget. Budget injustices at the state and federal level have labeled schools under-performing when everyone is working twice as hard. The district is asking for what they need in this budget. Budget is addressed as much to state and federal governments as to Gill and Montague.
- At the high school the biggest concern is that large number of students are not staying. There is a high dropout rate, especially among low-income, male, and special needs students. These dropout rates are significantly higher than state average. This is extremely troubling and the district is putting a number of things in place to correct this.
- Highlights of FY09 GMRSD Budget:
 - Chapter 70 aid down \$124,625 (Governor's budget – adjusted for choice, charter, transportation)
 - Regional transportation reimbursement percent remaining at 85%.
 - Moderate increase in Erving tuition.
 - Estimate same Medicaid reimbursement as for FY08.
 - Charter tuition reimbursement decreases significantly.
 - Investment income decreases significantly as a result of completion of building project.
 - SPED circuit breaker reimbursement decreases.
 - Inflation-indexed budget.
 - Utilities and heat increase 5.8%.
 - Salaries: up between 3% and 5%.
 - Benefits level funded.
 - Choice tuition out increases 18%.
 - SPED out-of-district placement increases 24.5%.
 - Plow/grounds truck for \$50,000.
 - \$100,000 for new programs/positions.
 - Total budget increase is \$887,177.
 - Administration increase is \$23,982.
 - Instruction increase is \$384,511.
 - School Services increase is \$15,304.
 - Operations and Maintenance increase is \$65,711.
 - Fixed Charges increase is \$13,456.
 - Equipment increase is \$50,000 (for plow/grounds truck).
 - Debt **decrease** is \$36,967.

- SPED tuition (private) increase is \$191,502.
- SPED tuition (public) increase is \$36,000.
- Choice and Charter increase is \$143,678.
- GIC savings to restore positions and rebuild central office capacity for planning and monitoring.
- Gains from entry into GIC health insurance group include: avoiding additional \$400,000 to budget, limit future increases to an average of 6%-8% compared to recent increases of 18%-20%) and generate a one-year gain.
- Staffing cuts have outpaced enrollment decreases by 2-1.
- Effect of the FY08 budget cuts hit the Special Education budget, which eliminated any cushion. Rather than asking for money for a SPED stabilization fund, the District is reserving part of the Excess & Deficiency account to use as a SPED stabilization account.
- Mr. Singleton stated that there was no time for questions and answers. Therefore there we will meet again next week to discuss the budget. We need to get all questions to the school by Monday so they have time to prepare answers. Questions should be addressed to Mr. Hanold. He will forward them to Ms. Bassett.
- Lee Stevens of Gill said that the assessment GMRSD is asking is impossible for Gill. Gill cannot afford this if they are to have any town functions left.
- Mary Kociela also mentioned how preliminary this budget is. The School Committee will be voting again the end of March.

Mr. Hanold invited school administration to the forum so that they are part of the process.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is at 5 PM on March 12, 2008.

Public Forum is at 7 PM on Monday, March 17, 2008 in the upstairs meeting room at Town Hall.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:05 PM

Respectfully Submitted,
Carolyn Olsen