

Town of Lincoln

Budget Board Meeting

March 19, 2008

Present:

**Ken Booth Claudette Lussier Jack Newman Greg Leonard Bob
Ericson**

**Carl Brunetti Roberta Gosselin Linda Noble Cheryl Ethier Joe
Renning**

Absent:

Sheila Chisholm

The meeting began at 7:10 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance

The minutes of March 13th were distributed for review.

**Jack Newman made a motion to accept the minutes, seconded by
Greg Leonard.**

**The minutes were accepted by a vote of 9-0 with Roberta Gosselin
abstaining because she was not present on March 13th.**

**Linda Noble read correspondence from Scungio to be noted in the
minutes.**

**Also distributed was correspondence from the Town Administrator in
response to the letter from Scungio.**

The Town Administrator was present and noted that the schools' budget charter due date was not met, and that they were then given leniency to meet and come up with another budget that complied with state mandates, and that they did not do that.

The Town Administrator stated that the only budget that the Budget Board should now consider is the Administrator's recommended budget with an increase of less than 2%.

The Town Administrator noted also that there were no other revenues for the schools because their revenues come in to the municipal portion of the budget and then they are funneled to the schools' budget as their local appropriation.

Bob Ericson believed that the best course of action for the Budget Board is to recommend the Town Administrator's proposed school appropriation of 1.83% and leave it to the schools to justify anything that they would need above that.

The Town Administrator noted that the schools' staffing levels are too high, and that they would not even be able to provide for a 0% increase for union teachers at the current staffing level.

The Town Administrator adjourned from the meeting

In additional correspondence, Linda Noble read for the record a letter from the Town Administrator to School Committee Chairperson MaryAnn Roll

Other correspondence distributed included a letter from the Department of Municipal Affairs to Finance Director John Ward, a

packet of budget modifications provided by the Finance Director, data found in the Providence Journal regarding program costs per resident and payrolls by community, a copy of State Law RIGL-16-2-21 regarding the levy cap, and revenue charts provided by the Finance Director.

Linda Noble noted that the Budget Board had to decide which proposed budget for the schools to present at the Public Hearing.

The 1.8% increase recommended by the Town Administrator was a somewhat arbitrary number in that it is not clear what would be included or if the schools can operate their departments and programs with that amount.

Linda Noble noted that the Budget Board could look at the information that has been given by the schools even though their proposal did not meet the regulations, and with some modifications their proposal could be made viable.

Jack Newman and Bob Ericson believed that the Budget Board should accept the only budget proposal so far that complied with regulations which was from the Town Administrator and the schools should work off of that budget.

Ken Booth noted that the Budget Board did start last years' budget process with a school budget from the schools that did not comply, but that the regulations were new and still being implemented so they did not know at the time.

Ken Booth noted that the Budget Board will meet with the School Committee, and that he agrees with the idea that the Budget Board

recommend the Town Administrators' school budget proposal.

Ken Booth suggested that the School Subcommittee recommend funding instructional needs only in the school budget.

Cheryl Ethier noted that it would be difficult determine what items in the budget are instructional and which are not.

Roberta Gosselin noted that the cafeteria fund had a surplus of \$200,000 which should be used for capital improvements.

Roberta also noted that Becky Boragine did give information regarding the library's budget to her, and that she and Bob Ericson will work with the library and analyze their budget.

The Budget Board discussed the possible collaborative for health care for the town, and the fact that the town may not realize a savings the first year in such a collaborative because they would need to set it up and develop a good history to get better rates.

The Town Council was to meet with the Budget Board regarding their budget but cancelled the meeting because they did not have any major concerns with their budget.

Ken Booth noted that if the Budget Board has questions, they can contact the Town Council to ask.

Linda Noble noted that the NEASC preliminary findings were good and that there was some excellence in the schools. The full report will come out in a few months.

The Budget Board discussed the revenue charts provided by the Town Administrator and the information regarding costs per resident found in the Providence Journal.

Lincoln, compared to other communities that are considered to have good school systems, has more staff for less students enrolled.

Linda Noble suggested that the Budget Board will have to look at class sizes, and noted that the schools did send layoff notices to 92 teachers, and it is unclear how many of those will actually be laid off.

Bob Ericson noted that Lincoln's graduation requirements are more than the state requirements, and he noted that the schools never went to digital portfolios.

The Budget Board discussed the fact that there may be many retirements coming in the town and schools.

Ken Booth noted that eventually, municipalities might have a state health care plan that would include separate plans for municipal employees, police employees, fire and rescue employees, and teachers.

The Budget Board decided that at the Public Hearing of the budget, they will read the schools' budget as recommended by the Town Administrator, but Ken Booth noted that he would speak with the Town Solicitor as well to get a legal opinion of that.

The Town Council, Town Administrator, School Administration, and Budget Board will be meeting on March 31st to come to an understanding of the total implications of the state cap mandates.

Bob Ericson noted that the Town Administrator interpreted that the Financial Town Meeting cannot change any revenue lines.

Ken Booth noted that the Financial Town Meeting can change revenue lines and that they have in the past, but also that the Moderator does not have to entertain any unreasonable motion with respect to revenues.

Bob Ericson noted that \$780,000 in revenues and \$400,000 in expenses will be cut out of the budget by setting up a sewer enterprise fund.

Ken Booth noted that the Sewer Enterprise Fund will not happen before the Financial Town Meeting so it will not change the numbers then, but it will happen in the next year.

Bob noted that the schools' \$500,000 surplus is also an issue, and he would like to see the sale of the school administration building for over \$1 million.

The Budget Board discussed capital improvements for the schools and noted that there will be a resolution for any capital improvements that will be funded.

Jack Newman made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Greg Leonard

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.