

August 13, 2024 Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Kristin Cacal (Community Member), Donna Dougherty (Community Member), Victor Karlsson, Matt Wenz
Presenters: None

Meeting began at 8:02am.

Victor Karlsson began the meeting by reviewing the Charter, which is re-adopted annually by the Board of Education based on BoE Policy 4231: Citizens Advisory Committee. He then referenced the prior meeting minutes, which are available on the District's website. Next, the fund balance projection and required Annual Report of Reserve Funds were reviewed. Victor noted that the annual financial statement audit is scheduled to begin next week, so the figures under review have not yet been audited. Still, the projection is not expected to change significantly after the audit. The current fund balance projection is consistent with those of the past several months, indicating a surplus of approximately \$2.9M. The Annual Report of Reserve Funds reflects the same reserve fund balances as those reviewed by the Finance Committee and approved by the Board of Education in June, with the only exception being the Employee Benefit Accrued Liability Reserve, which acts as a catch-all after all other reserves are adequately funded. This balance will be finalized after the audit is completed.

The Tax Warrant was discussed next, beginning with a review of the five-year Tax Levy history, which averaged 1.39%, inclusive of the current year's 2.90% Tax Levy increase. The District has been at or below the "Tax Cap" for each of the thirteen years since the "Tax Cap" legislation came into effect. The factors included in the Tax Rate setting process were discussed, which include Homestead/Non-Homestead apportionment, School Taxable Assessed Values, and Exemptions. Victor explained that multiple agencies are responsible for each factor:

- Towns control Assessed Values
- State controls State Aid, STAR, and the "Tax Cap" formula
- School District controls Homestead/Non-Homestead apportionment and the Tax Levy (community also controls the Tax Levy through the budget vote)

Beginning with the Tax Levy component, Victor explained that next year's Tax Levy is 2.90% greater than the prior year's, so if there were no changes to any of the other factors, then each taxpayer's bill would simply increase by 2.90%. However, he stressed that this never happens and that there are often many changes to assessments of the properties within the tax base. He added that any change in assessment for one property impacts the tax bill of all other properties.

Victor reviewed the changes to School Taxable Assessed Values, which were reported by the Assessors of each of the three towns. On average, School Taxable Assessed Values increased by 8.3% district-wide. He added that in general, School Taxable Assessed Values and Tax Rates have an inverse relationship so that any increase in School Taxable Assessed Values could limit, or even decrease, the Tax Rate. Since the Tax Levy increase was just 2.90% as compared to the much larger increase in School Taxable Assessed Values, Tax Rates *decreased* between 5.4% - 5.6% across the three Homestead municipal segments.

The next Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 3rd at 8am to review the District's Long Range Financial Plan, as well as, the continued borrowing plan for the Brewster Vision Capital Project. We will be joined by our Fiscal Advisors, who will share an update on capital project financial planning.

Meeting ended at 8:42am.

Respectfully submitted,

Victor Karlsson