01/18/2023 FinCom Minutes

Attending:

* Alan Flagg-Chair
* Susanne Shays-Recorder
* Corey Packard
* Stephen Dollinger
* Paul Rochette
* Lucy Tessnau
* Don Haapakoski
* Bradford Taylor
* Maribel LaRange
* Sheila Muir
* Cheryl Duval
* Walter Nutter
* Kyla Rossi
* Chris Rossi
* Meeting called to order at 6:00p
* BoS meeting called to order at 6:00p
* QRSD representatives
  + Wish to connect with Town officials to open dialog on FY2024 budget
  + No meetings with sub-committee yet
    - First will be Tues, Jan 24th at 6:00p
  + Budget still in development
  + Started later that normal due to financial department personnel strain
  + Do not have a sense of prelim #s but should have a better sense on Tues, Jan 24th
  + Shared with BoS the increase in cost of out-of-district tuition for students with disabilities
    - 14% increase
    - Set by state and affects all school districts
    - Very unexpected as 2-3% increase is typical
    - If same # of students as prior year, this would be a $268,000 increase in budget if everything else is level
  + Want to keep lines of communication between QRSD and Towns open
  + School committee meetings are on YouTube
  + Oil bids has a $.60 increase, or 20%
  + Health insurance rate is still in question but was 5% last year
  + Transportation’s 2.5% increase is set
  + Special Education transportation contract is up for renewal
    - Problems getting drivers
  + New Braintree school building use is not revenue
  + Must do six collective bargaining agreement negotiations now
    - These are negotiated every three years
    - salary increases were 2.25%, 1.25%, and 1.5% for past three years
    - Agreements are all on the same renewal schedule
  + Capital projects
    - Capital project needed-chiller tower replacement at $500kish
    - Capital project wanted-press box with seating for alumni field at a guess of $350kish
      * Currently fundraising
      * Currently using scaffolding, which is not ideal
    - If fundraising exhausted would ask communities to authorize a loan
    - All five towns would need to add a warrant for town vote
  + Date to complete QRSD budget
    - First meeting Tues, Jan 24th at 6:00p
    - State funding usually know by end of Jan, but new governor gets until Tues, Mar 7th
    - Public hearing is Wed, Mar 15th
    - Deadline is Sun, Apr 30th
      * May not have numbers from state until Jul
      * State funding is 50% of budget
      * Would have spending budget but will not have state aid so cannot do town assessments at this point
    - Will not know every number by Wed, Mar 15th
      * This date is a goal, but not a guarantee
        + Enrollments will affect number of teachers needed

Based on current registration, uses census for kindergarteners

Closer and closer to Town meeting the numbers will solidify

Currently have large classes in elementary school

One student could tip the requirement for a second class

i.e., one fifth grade class vs 2 fifth grade classes

Retirements may not be replaced if enrollment does not warrant

* + Budget is fluid
    - Uses educated guess based on years of experience, but numbers change as situations clarify
    - Numbers may change after Town meetings
  + Do not have enough low-income families to qualify for extra state money
    - Currently receive $30/child from state
    - A bill has been filed to increase aid for rural school districts
      * Requests 10-fold increase in rural school aid-from $6m to $60m
      * MA representative Natalie Blais is the sponsor
    - Rural aid has increased but is not dependable as it is subject to appropriation, but it is nowhere near enough
  + QRSD funded security cameras and repair to chiller, so Towns were not burdened
  + Device ratio is currently 1:1, with no plans to go to 2:1 as there is no money for that
  + QRSD ask for Towns to feel free to reach out to them
* Review comments, inquiries, correspondences
  + Chair to talk with Lisa Taylor regarding item left in FinCom box
* Potential FinCom new member-Kyla Rossi
  + Appointment now, then sworn in at next ATM
  + Motion put forth to have her join FinCom
    - All in favor
* FY2023 budget to actual
  + Reviewed spreadsheet
  + Nothing of concern currently
* FY2024 budget
  + Worksheets due back to BoS Fri, Jan 20th
  + FinCom will have common meetings with BoS and department heads
  + Revenue forecast
    - BoS and FinCom believe Town accountant should build this
    - BoS will query
* New and/or old business
  + Rutland has lost their town accountant
  + Log home assessment issue will have no effect on FY2024 budget
    - Abatement refund budget could be exhausted though
  + Audit plan
    - BoS signed contract
    - Full audit will be conducted in the spring and will be done in advance of the ATM
  + Oakham will not join a five town “united effort” regarding QRSD budget as our fiduciary responsibility is to the residents of Oakham
* Prior meeting minutes
  + Motion put forth to accept
    - All in favor
* Next meeting TBD
* Motion put forth to adjourn meeting at 7:09p
  + All in favor