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HOLLIS/BROOKLINE COOP BUDGET COMMITTEE

July 17, 2008 Minutes

- Members Present: Forrest Milkowski, Doug Davidson, Steve Pucci, Ray Valle, Lorin Rydstrom and Greg d'Arbonne. Greg McHale arrived late to the meeting.
- Members Absent: Dan Peterson
- Guests/Public Present: Chris Hyde and Tom Enright.

COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION:

MEMBERSHIP	PHONE/OFFICE	E-MAIL/MAIL
Steve Pucci Chairman	H: 578-0383 W: C: 603- 521-4123	sdpucci@earthlink.net 25 Nartoff Rd., Hollis 03049
Greg McHale Vice Chairman	H: 673-7023 W: C: 603-560-0142	H: greg.mchale@gmail.com 42 Westview Rd., Brookline 03033
Greg d'Arbonne Secretary	H: 672-5830 W: 978-657-1271 C: 978-604-8835	H: Gdarbo6844@aol.com W: Gdarbonn@systems.textron.com 65 Cleveland Hill Rd., Brookline 03033
Dan Peterson School Board Rep	465-3858	DanJPeterson@usa.net 22 Shedd Lane, Hollis, 03049
Doug Davidson	H: 465-3071 W: 465-3077 C: 603-689-5805	rangerfund@charter.net 4 Sumner Lane, Hollis 03049
Forrest Milkowski	673-0399 603-759-1352 (cell)	ForrestMilkowski@earthlink.net Forrest@Market-Advantage.net P.O. Box 604, Brookline 03033
Lorin Rydstrom	465-2178 881-3700 (work)	Lorin.rydstrom@fetg.com 124 Dow Rd, Hollis, 03049
Ray Valle	H: 465-2800 W: C: 603-566-1020	delv@tds.net 85 Rideout Road, Hollis 03049

1. Committee Chairman Forrest Milkowski called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.
2. Forrest Milkowski waived the reading of the Minutes until Greg d'Arbonne can send out the Minutes from the last meeting for review by the Committee.
3. Forrest Milkowski stated he invited Chris Hyde of the Hollis Finance Committee to discuss an initiative involving both Hollis and Brookline. Greg d'Arbonne made a motion that the Budget Committee allow Chris Hyde to speak at the meeting. Lorin Rydstrom seconded the Motion.
 - a. **Motion:** Greg d'Arbonne made a motion that the Budget Committee allow Chris Hyde to speak at the meeting. Lorin Rydstrom seconded the motion.
 - b. **Vote:** 5 in favor of the motion, none against, 1 abstain. The motion passed.

Chris Hyde explained that both Hollis and Brookline are coming together to create some inter-board discussion, cost benefits from pooling resources, etc. From these, discussions will progress to how the Town's make any recommendations to make these happen. The

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proposal for this initiative is for 1 or 2 people from each board/committee from each town to volunteer for this activity. Currently it is focused on Hollis and once organized, Brookline will be brought in. Ray Valle stated there may be implications with the "Right to Know" laws and other RSA's. He suggested a legal opinion needs to be made on this plan. Chris said he would look into that. Chris stated he has spoken to a few of the Committees/Boards in Hollis about this plan. There has been commitment by some Board/Committee members to participate in this initiative.

4. Budget Item review: Forrest Milkowski asked to hear each person's opinion of what items they felt should be reviewed by the Budget Committee:
 - a. Steve Pucci stated that since he is new to the BudCom, he has more questions than answers at this moment about how budget departmental or specific line item amounts were determined, and what is appropriate for the future. Generally, with three kids in separate buildings in the district, he has seen many areas over the past 4 years where there are opportunities for improving how the school districts are spending taxpayer money. Clearly, historical trends over the past 5 years, or changes from previous year's budget, can help to identify target areas that we can review with the School Board and Admin. Steve was interested in knowing who exactly we could speak with to receive answers around budget line item questions, and how does he find out what options/alternatives were looked at in the past, to eliminate reinventing the wheel, and to ensure efficient/effective use of taxpayer money. Plus, how has performance and/or the quality of education improved in areas of the budget that have increased. Steve passed out, and reviewed a "process" for how to go about evaluating specific areas of the budget in a "zero-based budgeting" approach. However, since people seem to be hung up on the 0-based phrase itself, then forget about the phrase . . . the process is still sound. From his review of last year's budget, he identified some target areas for possible discussion or evaluation. We need to obtain an understanding of what exactly the line item is, or why it is the dollar amount shown, or why has it changed over the past 1 to 5 years, and what are alternatives or options that may exist to affect the dollars being spent. Some areas presented were: staff contract, insurance, tuition, high school expansion, energy, transportation, SAU assessment, Equipment/Equipment maintenance, Supplies, Dues/Reimbursements/Stipends, SPED, books, other programs, facility services/maintenance, and how do we "pool" resources or use "economies of scale" with the Town of Hollis and Hollis school districts to leverage the same taxpayer's dollars.
 - b. Doug Davidson stated he had similar concerns as Steve Pucci. He directed his comments to Tom Enright, who was in attendance at the meeting, and stated the Budget Committee needs to know how the \$230,000 items (big ticket items) are being managed. Doug then went down his list of items: compensation package of staff, unfunded mandates (e.g. Evergreen Law), public sector vs. other retirements systems, Steps and COLA, Evergreen clause recently passed by the State, Teacher buy-outs should be looked at, SPED, energy strategy, collaboration, ,continuous monitoring of the budget. In summary, Doug stated we need to have dialogue and collaborative work with the School Board.
 - c. Ray Valle stated we should look at Out of District tuition costs, do a true zero based budget review to look for more education value for our dollars and savings, energy program and policy and producing energy, curriculum review and strategy to understand where we are going for the future, facilities and their maintenance and

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- upgrades, outsourcing of services and other education needs, language program needs to be reviewed completely, strategy for improvement for use of books.
- d. Greg d'Arbonne stated he will not look at each line to look for cost savings. He feels the large ticket items bought over the past few years were bought at higher than necessary costs and each time a program is added to the schools, costs rise. Greg stated we need to be more vigilant and
 - e. Lorin Rydstrom stated he did not look at each line item as it was not worth the time. He feels the Budget Committee was going in the right direction the past few years. He does not agree with the direction of the Budget Committee after the last meeting. He likes the discussion this evening, especially collaboration. He stated each person is passionate about a particular item so he recommends that each person take the initiative and find the way to save the money and present that to the School Board. He wants to know how much the budget is going to increase.
 - f. Forrest Milkowski detailed his recommendations (see attached sheet)
 - g. Greg McHale sent his comments via e-mail (attached). He arrived after this discussion and spoke to the document with one question on transportation that Tom Enright addressed to explain SPED Out of District expenses.
5. Forrest Milkowski talked about the future expansion of the schools. He stated any new facilities should be built in Brookline. One example would be a Vocational Tech facility or SPED facility. The members discussed the merits of this idea with no agreed position.
 6. The members discussed the contract negotiation process. Ray Valle stated the Budget Committee needs to see the contract as soon as it is able to be shown to us so we can make an opinion to the public as to whether to vote for it or not.
 7. Forrest Milkowski asked the Budget Committee to wrap-up the evenings discussion and come up with a next step. Doug Davidson stated he will write a summary of his thoughts. He would like to know how did we compile the current budget, where are we going with this and look at options for the future. Ray Valle asked what Forrest was asking for as we have already voted on two motions about the budget. Forrest stated we have been discussing for the last few hours so we should come to some conclusions. Doug Davidson stated we should distil this down to be collaborative. Lorin Rydstrom asked what the next step in this process is. Doug said he would list what he has heard this evening and distill what the issues to discuss are from the meeting. Forrest said we do not have a mandate to collaborate. Doug said we should let Tom Enright talk and address questions. Doug asked Tom about the zero based budget and what the School Board thinks about this. Lorin stated that with the inflation rate at 5% how do we not increase the budget from last year. He stated we need to look at how we solve this. Ray stated that whatever we decide, it needs to be collaborative; it needs to be done with the School Board and not "to" the School Board. Forrest suggested we define "zero based budget." He asked that we work to help solve where funds can be saved. Forrest stated let's make an assumption that the School Board is not willing to work collaboratively with the Budget Committee toward a "zero based budget."
 8. Forrest Milkowski stated that it will be very difficult for him to continue to be the Chairman of the Budget Committee when he does not support a "zero based budget" for next year. Lorin Rydstrom stated he cannot take over as the Chairman as he agrees with Forrest's position about the zero based budget. The members discussed this situation. Forrest stated he would like to hand over the Chairmanship to those who support the zero based budget

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position. Forrest then stated he is resigning as Chairman and will remain with the Budget Committee as a member. Lorin stated he was also resigning his position as Vice Chairman but will continue to stay on the Budget Committee as a member. The members held an election and Steve Pucci was elected unanimously as Chairman. Doug nominated Steve, Ray seconded. For vice, Greg nominated by Ray, Doug second. All in favor.

- a. **Motion:** Doug Davidson made a motion that Steve Pucci serve as the Chairman of the Budget Committee. Ray Valle seconded the motion.
- b. **Vote:** 7 in favor of the motion, none against. The motion passed.

9.

- a. **Motion:** Greg d'Arbonne made a motion that the Budget Committee allow Chris Hyde to speak at the meeting. Lorin Rydstrom seconded the motion.
- b. **Vote:** 5 in favor of the motion, none against, 1 abstain. The motion passed.

10. Steve Pucci stated that Chris Hyde's suggestion of collaboration across the Towns and School committees, what does the Budget Comm think of this? The members discussed the issue.

11. Forrest made a motion to adjourn and Lorin seconded. All in favor. The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg d'Arbonne
Secretary