

TOWN OF PEMBROKE  
APPROVED  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES  
27 MARCH 2017

Chairperson Linda Peterson opened the meeting of the Advisory Committee in Pembroke Town Hall at 7:30PM on 27 March, 2017. Also present were Stephen Curley, Timothy Brennan, James McCollum, John G. Brown, Jr. Stephen Walsh, Richard McManus and Elizabeth Monks Guest: Erin Obey, School Superintendent; Michael Tropeano, School Committee Chairperson; Suzanne Scroggins, School Committee member; Ginny Wandell, School Committee member; Patrick Chilcott, School Committee member; Kaitlyn Tropeano; student; David Boyle, School Committee candidate; Matthew McNeilly; Marybeth Brust, Assistant School Superintendent; Mr. Bryant

Linda Peterson welcomed Erin Obey, Pembroke School Department Superintendent and members of the School Committee to review and discuss their FY18 Budget.

- Michael Tropeano began by acknowledging the members of the school committee combined have 50 years of experience. FY17 Budget was 31.3M – FY18 Budget is 32.6M a deficit of 1.2M this year. This is mainly due to the Collective Bargaining Agreement increase of \$894,000. FY18 Administrative priorities is \$406,000; this does not cover CBA. Stephen Curley asked what the percentage of the CBA is. Michael said this is listed on page 3 of the handout. FY17 was 3% - two drivers for this; teacher increases in previous years were below other CBA's and Pembroke is extending the school day next year and needed to get buy-in. FY18 is 2%. Erin Obey noted 60% of teachers are continuing to receive their step increases and 45% are at top of scale. Patrick Chilcott noted they split from scale; about six or seven years ago during contract negotiations they decreased step increases from 5-6% to 3%.
- The tuition increase from FY17 to FY18 is \$200,000 due to students attending vocational and Norfolk Aggie. Linda Peterson asked what programs Norfolk offers. Erin said Diesel Mechanical, an Equestrian program and a Horticultural program. Patrick Chilcott noted as a result of unfunded mandates if a student wants to attend one of these schools Pembroke must pay. The School Committee recently met with Josh Cutler, State Rep. and asked again for a moratorium on increases such as this. Pembroke must maintain and offer them something so they want to attend Pembroke High School; if it's not a draw they're going to go someplace else.
- Pupil to pupil Pembroke is 9<sup>th</sup> on the bottom of pupil spend; now 13% with override. Stephen Curley reference the Comparative Expense Analysis for 2015 that includes Pembroke and 23 other communities. Average per capita is \$1538.00/\$1524.00; Pembroke is at \$1608.00 in spending. Michael Tropeano reference page 4 of the handout for per pupil spending. Silver Lake is at \$14,405.52. Pembroke spends \$400.00 per student on Administration costs; \$150.00/28% less in state. More money is going to the students. Hull is less than Pembroke; they have fewer students.
- Pembroke has 3,200 students they service on a daily basis. Richard McManus asked what the student population was three years ago. Erin noted we're down 140 students. An increase in population is seen during the summer could be up to 75 students. Stephen Walsh compared student population stating in 2009/2010 there were 3,441 students and in 2014 there were 3,002 students; a decrease of 500 students. Erin said the state calculation for pre-kindergarten is 1/3 of a student. The fall student projection is 3,000 students.

<sup>1</sup>The Chairperson did not vote on this motion.

- The town has supported the school district and the schools will be extending the school day by 35 minutes next year.
- Health insurance increases for the town were discussed. School employees are paying 25% of their health insurance. Patrick Chilcott said it would be important to have all Collective Bargaining Agreements go to 25%. Stephen Walsh noted that employee share at state government is 35%. Stephen Curley said Advisory will suggest to the Board of Selectmen new employees should be at 50%.
- Stephen Walsh said it seems like Pembroke is running two separate towns, i.e. HR; A/P, Financials, etc. (town and school department). Could any of these services between the town and school be consolidated? Every town department is looking for something in their FY18 budget and all have a good reason for what they want. He asked Erin what is the annual cost of the school's financial system. Erin said they use ADS and it cost about \$20,000 – \$22,000. The customized data is about \$10,000 a year. Patrick Chilcott noted you need the upfront investment to make the change. Stephen Walsh also noted the town has invested in IT for the past four years with no employee training to go with it i.e. excel, etc. The school committee recognized Erin Obey for doing an excellent job of bringing in new technology and also providing the training.
- Michael Tropeano continued by referencing page 4 of the handout; where their budget has been and the amount of the town's contribution. Timothy Brennan noted this was misleading as the cost of healthcare falls on the town. Tim asked what the percentage of school department employees are enrolled in the town's healthcare. Erin said about 60%.
- Social Worker cases – there have been 1200 interactions. The number of students in need is increasing at an alarming basis. Special Education is at 16M for FY18 – 469 students in secondary. Vocation Ed went from 552 to 851 students. Erin noted the population of student early intervention; severe students stay and not moving on to Kindergarten. They have one Social Worker between elementary schools; all three schools could use their own. Cheryl Larson, Social Worker started a program called "Kidshare Group"; a support group for untraditional care givers, this has been well received.
- Technology – 4,000 devices with two support personnel. They have one support person for 600 devices; no one to work with the teachers to integrate technology. Maintenance is one year on devices.
- Revenue – full day kindergarten – pays for one teacher; transportation/secondary students \$80,000; High school students must buy a bus pass; athletics \$60,000 – \$70,000.
- Turf Field – the school submitted a Warrant Article for the town to pay for the bond. The school department will pay for it out of their budget. They plan an increase in athletic user fees; 480-500 students use this field. Linda Peterson asked what percentage of the town's population is on a fixed income. Michael Tropeano said he's not sure there is a way to know that. They collect approximately \$125,000 in fees a year. Distributed over 1M in scholarships last year by the parents. The community does a great job supporting the school.
- Timothy Brennan asked what the school is doing to promote/market Pembroke schools for those looking to relocate. Pembroke's rating on Zillow does not rank well. Erin said they did very little until this year. They are now using social media, contacted local real estate agents, have provided newsletters to the COA and are working with Chamber of Commerce. She also noted MCASS scores have stopped at elementary which lowered their scores.
- Linda Peterson asked what % of school age students go to Charter schools, BC High, Catholic Memorial and why? Erin noted that 35 students attend Charter schools. Anywhere from 10-12 students may attend these high schools; it's usually a family decision. It's less than 2% of students.

<sup>1</sup>The Chairperson did not vote on this motion.

- Timothy Brennan asked the school committee what they're worried about long term. Michael Tropeano said revenue; being able to grow top line revenue. They have been able to manage expenses and Michael is proud to have worked with this group of administrators, school committee members and school department. Patrick Chilcott said the facts and metrics are at 11%; lowest per student in the state. Need to educate town population. Timothy Brennan said the town operating model needs to be fixed; healthcare costs are eating up our budget every year.
- Advisory is having an open meeting with the town on May 1, 2017 at the Library if the School Committee/Department would like to be involved. They said they would be available.
- Stephen Walsh asked the school about managing snow & ice treatment for the school buildings. DPW has said that \$100,000 of their budget is snow and ice for the school. Michael Tropeano said they will look at it again.

Advisory thank Erin Obey and the School Committee for coming.

Advisory reviewed and discussed the following correspondence:

- Petition Article documents received from Ed Thorne, Town Administrator
- MA Sick law information printed from the state website for review
- Library is available for the Advisory Public meeting on 5/1/17 at 7:30PM
- PAC TV was notified and are available to provide a live feed for the 5/1/17 meeting
- Steve Curley submitted a Comparative Expense Analysis for 2015
- Advisory February 2017 monthly Financials
- Ed Thorne, Town Administrator and Michael Buckley, Town Accountant are available to meet with Advisory on Monday, April 3, 2017 at 7:30PM

Upon motion moved by James McCollum 2<sup>nd</sup> by Timothy Brennan following the discussion it was

**VOTED<sup>1</sup>:** To accept the minutes of 20 March 2017. John G. Brown Jr., Stephen Walsh and Elizabeth Monks supported the motion. Stephen Curley and Richard McManus abstained.

Timothy Brennan asked what is the percentage of fire department calls. Fire calls versus paramedic calls. He spoke with Ed Thorne, Town Administrator who believed it was about 90% paramedic calls. However, every call requires a fire truck to also respond. There is a Warrant Article from the Fire Chief requesting four additional fire fighters. This Article does not include healthcare costs; it should be included in the request.

The next Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 3, 2017 at 7:30PM.

The Advisory Committee adjourned at 9:15PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Curley, Clerk

<sup>1</sup>The Chairperson did not vote on this motion.