

Town of Princeton, Mass. – Oct. 19, 2017 – 5 PM

Board of Selectmen – Regular Meeting

Present: Chair Jon Fudeman, Richard Bisk, Edith Morgan w/ TA Nina Nazarian.

5:00 PM Joint Meeting with Advisory Committee, Chair John Shipman, Wayne Adams, George Handy, Bill Lawton, Don Schoeny with Jim O'Coin appearing at 5:20 PM.

Nina N. asked BOS to decide what to ask of department heads for their budgets next year, whether it's per usual level funding/services or something else such as a zero-based budget. It may be time to ask staff for capital requests, listing priorities, and allow a three-week turnaround for replies.

Richy suggested asking them what they would do if they had (as a random figure) 10 percent more, or 10 percent less, than level-funding. Discussion ensued around how tax bills and the tax rate are calculated. Both boards are intent on direct communication with dept. heads through budget process, and how to encourage keeping or cutting their budgets without anyone getting defensive. Interactive discussions should encourage new ideas for cost-cutting or for sources of revenue.

5:25 PM George H. asked Nina for three suggestions that would enhance the budget process and then extended the concept and asked for three things that were done last year that should be repeated, and three things that should not be done again.

In a memo from last year, the Adv. Cmte. had suggested cutting all operational budgets by three percent to start funding capital projects, but that did not gain traction with selectmen. Don S. pointed out that the biggest mistake town officials make is that no one evaluates anything, they just continue to accept level-funding, and it implies that we're doing everything right. He said that no one's asking the tough questions, and officials could be more creative about reining in expenses, as by regionalization, restructuring staff, privatization of certain services, elimination of PMLD, outsourcing some highway work, etc. BOS and Adv. Cmte. should be questioning dept. heads about these possibilities, in a give & take conversation, not putting anybody on the hot seat.

Jon F. wants to find out why other towns spend less per capita on highway and police departments. It was suggested to start by meeting with Glenn L. and Michele P. and Jon indicated that he would ask Judy Dino to meet with them. Wayne also offered to meet. Jon summarized the whole discussion by asking both boards to start a budget process incorporating respectful dialog with dept. heads.

Group had lengthy discourse on debt service, long-term vs. short-term borrowing and best practices, and how Princeton compares with surrounding towns.

John S. noted that the current budget spreadsheets include a column for comments to provide contextual information in relation to the numbers being requested, asking that it be consistently used.

It was announced that Nov. 2 will be roundtable budget discussion with WRSD and one member each from BOS and Adv. Cmte. will attend with the T.A. Nina suggested that officials

spell out where the town stands on the issue of the WRSD budget not being sustainable over time. She also asked that any additional comments for the budget memo be submitted by Oct. 25th —in time for Oct. 30 BOS meeting.

6:20 PM Jon F. began explaining steps toward creating a financial plan. Selectmen then voted all in favor to charge Jon with the task of preparing, for the board's review, a list of issues that a long-term financial plan would address. To keep rest of board informed on his progress, he offered to provide intermittent updates and a continuing chance for input.

6:30 PM Richy suggested using Doodle Poll to schedule (extra) meetings and all agreed. Jon noted the conference call with Monica Lamboy from Collins Center is set for Friday at 9 AM in the Annex, as a posted meeting. They need to find out if the grant from the Div. of Local Services can be switched from a Capital Plan project to operational study. Jon said he intends to communicate with towns of Sherborn and Carlisle to get their administrators' thoughts on the role of the Adv. Cmte, staff efficiencies, etc.

6:40 PM Selectmen voted all in favor to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted, Marie Auger, admin. assist.

BOS Referenced Documents: Memo from the Adv. Cmte.

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