



Town of Paxton
Board of Selectmen
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Regular Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 1, 2024

**Meeting Location: Training Room of the Public Safety Complex
576 Pleasant Street, Paxton, MA 01612**

Members Present: Julia N. Pingitore, Chair
Kirk R. Huehls, Vice Chair
Carol L. Riches, Clerk

Town Administrator: Heather M Munroe, Town Administrator

Attendees: see Attendee List

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:10pm. We will enter into Executive Session and will return to the regular meeting only for the purpose of adjourning.

OLD BUSINESS

- **(JP)** We need to have some discussion with the current warrant articles to make sure we are happy with what is there. The way the 2 warrant articles are we have a warrant article on the override and the one on the cut budget. So the 1st one is contingent on the override the 2nd cutting the town budget and not the school budget
- **(KH)** I don't think it's fair to not give the voice to the people to decide where they want the town or the school or both.
- **(JP)** I think there are 2 different things. 1 an opportunity to vote down the school budget we are not currently giving them that opportunity. I think there needs to be a different way of approaching that.
- **(HM)** in speaking with town counsel. 3 major options. (refer to email that Heather presented. 1 – town & school as is. Voting anything less than the school budget is a no to the school. If the school has no other no votes then we go back to town meeting to fix it. Paxton and another town say no then we go back for another piece
- 2 - Town Only - take the school out all together and just town services
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- 3 – Menu or two overrides - 2 separate questions so you would have the school but with and without the override and the same for the town with and without the override
- **(KH)** we have to be as concise as we can for the voters clarity.
- **(HM)** my recommendation is to go with the current one that we have. If we are looking at cutting the big departments then we would be looking at the school as well. Fixing our base tax rate helps everyone, the school included.

- (JP) the way the warrant was drafted I think we had an oversight in being able to turn the school budget down. We are all in this together and if we did not have a regional district, it would be just the town. In the past we have had 2 overrides in the past to determine where the deficit had come from. We have a growing budget, and it is our entire budget that does not come from one particular area. I think you reduce your chances of your override passing if you do.
- (KH) we have gone back to each of our dept and asked for a reduction but have not gone back to the school to ask for a reduction. How do we give our residents the best choice.
- Neil Bagdis, - concern about information to the residents
- (HM) waiting for some final information... COA morning café. On April 6th from 10am to 12pm host a get to know your fire dept with a q and a April 16th the RML a budget info session April 8th the SB meeting working on a presentation from the major dept .
- Neil Bagdis - put the fact that the information piece is available on the sign.
- (HM) working on getting the webpage updated with all the FY25 budget information. We don't yet have final numbers yet.
- (JP) good point that word spreads quickly.. people need to make their own educated decision. Reiterate the three options as to which article option to select. I don't anyone of these options is wrong.
- (CR) Im still battling with the fact that I have only seen the town budget cut and no one from fin com say we aren't going to cut the school budget.
- Mark Love – I'm of the position that there should be two separate article. Because that's the way we have always done it. There are strong advocates of the school and those that think it should be limited to 21/2. So if we put it into one article we take that away. Wednesday fin com has the wrsd budget on the agenda as far as what our position is. Non of us are against education but be against the spiraling increase in the budget. If we take the opportunity to take that away it is a mistake. That is why I am for 2 articles.
- (JP) if we keep it as one don't have the opportunity for the SB and Fin Com to say if we support one or the other.
- (CR) open warrant change articles to 4 and see how Finance reacts on Wednesday and then on Thursday we decide on amounts.
- (JP) we are at 4 article so we are at 2 ballot questions. Full budget contingent on override for town reduced services for the town.. wrsd contingent on override and then a second one. There would
- (HM) paper cut, reduction to 5%, presentation based on a 500,000 cut. 9.5% of the if you have a contingent budget you have a number to start a fiscal year. Make more cuts or take funds from elsewhere.
- (HM) or we don't do non contingent articles on the warrant. Then we go to town meeting and ballot and the result determines what we need to do before June 30th and then go back and vote the non-contingent budget.
- (JP) 2 articles and we come back
- (HM) I think the 2 would be better to not be so confusing.
- (JP) school budget contingent on override and a town budget contingent on the override
- **Motion (CR) seconded (JP) to reopen the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting on May 6, 2024. Unanimous, all in favor. (KH) yes, (CR) yes, (JP) yes.**
- **Motion (CR) seconded (JP) to include wrsd budget contingent on an override as article #16. Unanimous, all in favor. (KH) yes, (CR) yes, (JP) yes.**
- **Motion (CR) seconded (JP) to include town budget contingent on an override as article #17. Unanimous, all in favor. (KH) yes, (CR) yes, (JP) yes**

- (JP) Discuss What are we going to provide the town as an override amount. Fin CO deficit plus 1/3 of the free cash amount
- **Mark Love** - ambulance receipts average 323,000. Roll back 400,000 to 300,00 which seemed to being the sweet spot.
- (JP) 300,000 was the number that we started using so that makes sense to go back to that. Reasonable consideration.
- **Mark Love** – presented a memo (copy and past here)
- (JP) I agree with adding back into those funds 600,000 in free cash included to balance the budget, so that amount tdoes not become freed up
- **Motion (CR) seconded (JP) to close the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting on May 6, 2024. (KH) yes, (CR) yes, (JP) yes.**
- **Motion (CR) seconded (JP) to leave the regular meeting and entered into Executive Session at 10:16pm and we will return to the regular meeting for the purpose of adjourning. (CR) yes, (JP) yes.**
- (JP) think about 2 warrant the full true deficit is the if you don't put out the full amount you rare taking some decision making away form the public. If it falls, then they have spoken then we come back and think about a different number.
- **HM** – 840 deficit and 500,00 for free cash 1.340,000 total. So we will vote on this on Thursday.
- **Jp** – keep the number tied to some basis and reality so the deficit and free cash that is the gap. So, if you put it out at a number less than that we will be in the same place very soon.
- **Mark love** – reference the financial policy and the ten-year plan.
- (JP) I get where you are coming form and understand sticking to the plan but I think we may have been a little over . years one and two we have not been able to follow the policy, so we need to recognize, and the mere presence of the policy should not determine that as what we are at.
- **Neil Bagdis** - as elected member of planning board and CIPC and as a resident of town I have had input form other boards zoning fin com that I believe the present ta is doing an excellent job. Discussed the current dilemma and all of a sudden keep the team in place and try to keep the team in place. If you did have the pleasure of watching the fin com meeting has purchased a new fire truck. I am all in favor of that. However, looking at he budget situation we are looking at right now with an override if we paid for the truck at a debt that would disappear in ten years and then its wiped off rather taking on an override which increases the taxes for ever.
- (JP) I value the fact that you took an extra look at that for a creating solution. it is still a one-time cash infusion and we as a town will be looking at an override again next year. One time cash out of ARPA and then taking on debt which would d be an override itself and then next year looking for another override.

ADJOURN

- **Motion (CR) seconded (JP) to leave the regular meeting and entered into Executive Session at 7:30pm and we will return to the regular meeting for the purpose of adjourning. (KH) yes, (CR) yes, (JP) yes.**
- **Returned to Regular Session at 8:33pm**
- **Adjourned Meeting at 8:33pm, Unanimous all-in favor. (KH) yes, (CR) yes, (JP) yes.**

- The next meeting is scheduled for April 4, 2024, 6:00pm.

Documents from the Meeting filed in BOS office:

Agenda

Attendance list

Wachusett Regional School District FY25 Budget

Respectfully submitted,



Donna Graf-Parsons, Executive Assistant