

Minutes of the Longmeadow Finance Committee
Thursday, March 17, 2005 – 7:00 pm Longmeadow Fire Dept Meeting Room

Members Present:	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>
Judd Peskin, Chairperson	x	
Paul Santaniello, Vice Chairperson	x	
Mark Barowsky	x	
Carla Gunn	x	
Steven Marantz	x	
Jerry Nolet	x	
Suresh Samant	x	

Budget Hearing with the School Committee: School Committee Chairperson Bill Hoff opened by giving a brief history of the School budget process from the original proposal of the Superintendent (+\$5.0 million from FY05) to the current needs budget (+\$3.1million). Committee member Jim Nittoli gave a summary of the FY06 proposal and School Superintendent AndersEn got into some of the details including briefly identifying the 22.79 new Full Time Equivalents (FTE's) at a cost of \$914,697. The group highlighted that many of the concerns reported in a special study by Mark Abrahams had to be addressed including the review of policies, practices, and procedures.

Finance Committee (FC) Chairperson Peskin thanked the School group saying it was the best presentation of the School budget he had seen during his tenure on the FC. Mr. Peskin acknowledged that it was easy to see where the funds were going and what may have to be cut. While content with the presentation Mr. Peskin was not happy with the budget numbers citing the Schools generosity to its employees as the major problem. Mr. Peskin noted that 5-6% wage increases were not sustainable. Mr. Hoff felt these increases were in line with increases granted by the then Board of Selectmen. Steve Marantz requested documentation of School cuts over the last few years. Mr. Hoff cited cuts were real due to a bottom line 3% cut in the School budget a few years back. Mr. Barowsky made comparisons to School business staff and Town business staff regarding compensation and responsibilities. Dr. AndersEn was to forward the newly approved School job descriptions for comparative purposes. Jerry Nolet expressed his gratitude in the well presented budget document but felt the school collective bargaining agreement held the Town hostage for an override. Mr. Marantz reminded the group of the FC's advocacy for the more recent overrides. Chairperson Peskin expressed his concern that Town's like Longmeadow cannot continuously live in the confides of Prop 2-1/2.

Mr. Nittoli inquired if there was a Prop 2-1/2 amount the FC would support and if they would give consideration to High School requested increases (8.2 FTE's/\$354K).

It was noted that three Revolving Funds were not part of the budget presentation - School Lunch, School Athletics and Summer School.

Mark Gold, chairperson of the Capital Planning Committee voiced his concerns over the deferred maintenance within the School Dept and how these matters are becoming capital needs. The Center School window painting could become the next prime example.

Chairperson Peskin commented on the breaking point of the taxpayer. He did not want to see property taxation be a factor in resident's decisions to leave Town.

School Committee member Mary Vogel suggested the 3 groups (School Committee, Select Board, and Finance Committee) meet to address the revenue issues.

The FC set meeting dates for March 24th and 31st, 2005.

A motion was made to eliminate the Select Board stipends (\$2,000 ea) and to stop taxpayer funding of Select Board members health insurance. The vote passed 6-0-1 (Nolet abstained).

The FC voted to adjourn at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Paul J. Pasterczyk
Town Accountant