

Minutes of the Longmeadow Appropriations Committee  
Wednesday, March 31, 2004 – Fire Department Meeting Room

Committee Members Present: Steven Marantz – Chairperson, William Engelberger,  
James Nittoli, Judd Peskin, Paul Santaniello

Chairperson Marantz opened the Appropriations Committee (AC) by summarizing the 3 budgetary projections which they had reviewed the previous week. Since the AC seemed to be in agreement regarding the scenario that required a \$768,297 override, Mr. Marantz explained the assumptions and how that number was determined. The assumptions in the \$768,297 scenario included raising the levy limit to the maximum, a 10% reduction in CH70 and Lottery funding and a 3% increase in the Town's General Fund Estimated Receipts. The Town's Capital Stabilization Fund would contribute towards the required debit service as they have in the past. On the expenditure side salaries would be increased 1.5% for wage adjustments and 1.5% for steps. Other operating expenditures would go up 1% and Employee benefits would be as known for FY05 with a 7.5% in FY06 and beyond. Chairperson Ashe of the Board of Selectmen (BOS) spoke briefly on behalf of the BOS stating that after listening/understanding the scenario that it sounded good and would see to it that the BOS placed on override question on the ballot. Mr. Ashe did inquire on the possibility of additional state aid and the status of the excess Employee Benefit budget dollars. The AC stated that it was their desire to bank whatever, if any, excess funds that may exist. Selectmen Haberman questioned the reality of the salary assumption citing a recent comment made by an arbitrator the Town had recently dealt with. School Committee member William Hoff pressed for \$754,916 in School funding above level funding. That amount would keep the status quo on the teaching staff. Chairman Marantz expressed the position of the AC and that just because an override number was being considered it did not mean the tightening of the belt would stop. The higher the override amount the greater chance of failure. Mr. Marantz commented that the AC proposal was a longer term solution that still required some tough decisions on budgetary priorities. Given a successful override the future budget amounts are being set now. AC member Santaniello, before committing to the override amount, wanted to see a collaborative effort with the School Committee for fiscal review. Mr. Marantz expressed his concern for budgetary transparency.

The Appropriations Committee voted 4-1 to support the \$768,297 override proposal.

The Appropriations Committee deliberated on the use of the anticipated excess \$270K, in the FY05 Employee Benefits budget. A motion was made to put the full amount of the anticipated excess towards reserves. The motion was defeated 3-2.

A motion was made to apply \$120K towards reserves and release the remaining amount as follows: School \$100K and non-school \$50K. The motion passed 3-2.

The A/C further discussed a few other procedural matters regarding the FY05 budget. First the \$400K Special Education Reserve would remain a separate article and not be built into the School Budget. A Fire Inquiry-on-Duty line item would be created similar to the Police line item. The Parks and Recreating department would be asked to see if they could absorb the utility costs associated with their usage of the Town Yard facilities.

Lastly, Paul Pasterczyk, Town Accountant brought the AC up to date with regard to the "overlay" accounts. Annually funds are set aside to offset property tax disputes, mostly valuation matters. Nearly \$600K has accumulated over the last 10 years or so. The AC questioned the possible use of these funds. Mr. Pasterczyk provided a listing from the Assessors office that showed \$556K worth of property tax disputes. One large case accounted for over \$400K of this amount. It was agreed that now was not the time to be utilizing these funds. Pending the outcome of the tax disputes the AC would consider the release of these funds.

The AC voted to adjourn at 10:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul J. Pasterczyk  
Town Accountant