

**Milton School Committee
Special Meeting
Town Hall Lower Conference Room
February 11, 2009**

Committee Present: Beirne Lovely, Chair, Lynda Lee Sheridan, Vice Chair, Chris Huban, Mary Kelly, and Glenn Pavlicek

Staff Present: Mary Gormley, Superintendent; John Phelan, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Personnel; Paul Hilton, Assistant Superintendent for Business

The Milton School Committee, the Board of Selectmen, and the Warrant Committee convened a joint meeting at 7:00 p.m. to discuss budget issues (FY09 and FY10) and the potential override question for Milton voters. Senator Brian Joyce and his Legislative Director, Jeff Perkins, were also present for this meeting. Senator Joyce gave a presentation detailing how the state puts together its budget and reviewed the events leading to the economic “tsunami”. Some discussion topics after Senator Joyce’s presentation included recent cuts to local aide, the GIC program (the Town of Randolph is estimating a savings of \$750,000 from joining the GIC), wage and hiring freezes for the state (under discussion), and possible options for Milton to increase its revenue (meal tax, local property tax for phone companies, and increasing the commercial tax base).

Mr. Hurley, Warrant Committee Chair, discussed the proposed cuts to certain FY09 budgets. The School Department’s portion of these cuts equals \$133,764 from its existing budget. Mr. Hurley explained that is \$70,000 less than originally proposed. He further explained that the snow and ice budget has a current deficit of \$425,000 and it is estimated this could go up to \$551,700. The Warrant Committee’s proposal is to keep money in the reserve fund and in free cash to allow coverage for the \$551,700.

Mr. Lovely gave an update of recent School Committee discussions and votes (from the February 10, 2009 meeting).

- The School Committee voted unanimously to recommend that an override question be put on the ballot for April, 2009.
- The School Committee voted unanimously that the schools’ portion of an override number would be \$1.3 million (providing that the level funding budget shortfall is \$1.2 million and is also included in the override amount).
- The School Committee voted unanimously to request using the Stabilization Fund to help bridge the budget gap.
- Mr. Lovely has approached the Milton Educators Association with respect to asking the teachers and other members to discuss reopening contract negotiations. The MEA leadership is in the process of discussing this request with its Executive Committee and the School Committee is awaiting a reply.
- It was the general consensus of the School Committee to have a representative from MASBO come in to assess the business office to see what alternatives there may be for replacing Mr. Hilton who is due to depart for another position at the end of FY09.
- Any amount under the \$1.3 million would not permit us to keep the elementary school open.
- The School Committee is awaiting a response from the School Building Authority regarding the potential closing of an elementary school.

Ms. Gormley informed the group of the cuts that would be made to the school system to make up the \$1.3 million. With these reductions, the Administration believes it can maintain the elementary school structure; however, there will be increases to class size. As has been detailed by the School Department, Mr. Lovely stated that he would be interested in seeing the number of FTEs (full time equivalents) that will be reduced on the Town-side. Mr. Hurley informed the group that impact statements (of a level funded budget) for the various Town departments have been posted on the Town website.

Mr. Lovely inquired if an override amount had been determined for the Town-side. Ms. Fagan-Bauer, Chair of the Board of Selectmen, replied that they have not had the opportunity to discuss this yet; they will discuss this at the next meeting on February 18, 2009. Ms. Fagan-Bauer further reported that the Board of Selectmen is working hard with the Unions (Unions are meeting February 27, 2009). Town Administrator Mearn reported that the DPW settled their contract; however, the Police and Fire have not and there are no set-asides for those contracts. Selectmen Shields stated that 2011 could be worse than 2010. He feels the Town should start thinking of an override for this year and for next year. With regard to having an override question on the ballot for April, Mr. Shields believes in the system the Town has always followed (having information presented at the Annual Town Meeting and then put to the voters in June). Warrant Committee member Leroy Walker agreed with Mr. Shields that Town Meeting is the best vehicle to get the maximum number of people educated with regard to an override.

The group also discussed possible compensation adjustments for Town employees. Since some contracts on the Town-side are not yet settled, Mr. Lovely asked if this would mean closing those contracts. Town Administrator Mearn stated Milton does not have over-paid Town employees. The contracts are reasonable, especially if employees will now have to take on more responsibility due to less staffing. Mr. Pavlicek added that the state is looking at packages for their Unions (with escalation clauses for FY11 and FY12). He feels that when discussing raise freezes, it has to include Administration as well. Warrant Committee member Brendan McLaughlin commented that revenue for the Town goes up 2% in a good year. He stated that if we give raises more than our revenue, we would need an override every year (or a reduction in services). Ms. McEttrick does not feel the problem lies with employee raises. She explained that the Town depends mostly on property tax and overrides are a result of Proposition 2 ½.

Mr. Hurley urged the School Committee and the Town to start thinking about FY11 and what would happen in the event there is no override for FY10. Since Senator Joyce also discussed the possibility of FY11 being worse than FY10, Ms. Fagan-Bauer explained that is the reason why she cannot imagine tapping into the Stabilization Fund.

Mr. Walker asked if the Board of Selectmen Chair would entertain a motion to discuss collective bargaining strategies. He was informed that, as a group, they cannot discuss these matters.

Mr. Shields suggested that the Warrant Committee prepare a spreadsheet showing what could be saved with a \$2.5 million override; a \$3.5 million override, and that he email that information to the Board of Selectmen. It was mentioned again that the Board of Selectmen will meet on February 18, 2009. A televised Saturday session was also discussed for the following weekend (Saturday) to give citizens another opportunity to hear how bad the situation is.

Motion was made to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 p.m.