

TOWN OF HARVARD
TRI-BOARD
Minutes

Draft

Meeting Date: Jan 21, 2009

Meeting Place: Town Hall

Members Present: **Finance Committee:** George McKenna (Chair) Steve Colwell, Marie Crowley Sobalvarro, Marie Fagan, Lori Granville, Terry Mead,; Bob Thurston, Associate members Paul von Loesecke, Collyn Bradley; **School Committee:** Stu Sklar; Virginia Justicz; Willie Wickman, Keith Cheveralls; **Board of Selectmen:** Leo Blair, Ron Ricci, Peter Warren

Others Present: Tim Bragan, Town Administrator; Lorraine Leonard, Finance Director; Tom Jefferson, School Superintendent;

Meeting Time: 7:01 pm

Adjournment Time: 8:52 pm

Discussions and Actions

- George McKenna opened discussion of 2009 budget with background info re: state aid reductions. Numbers from the state look like a cut of \$300,000 that we will need to reflect in the 2009 budget over the remainder of FY09. He said he expects further cuts for 2010, but it is not clear how much.
- Tim Bragan presented powerpoint with details of the \$300,000 projected shortfall. Also, he expects local receipts to fall about \$50,000 for FY09. So total expected shortfall will be \$350,000.
- Discussion followed: Willie Wickman asked for status of health insurance options (on BoS's agenda); Virginia Justicz asked about status of federal funds for shovel-ready projects (6 were submitted, including town center sewer, water & sewer on Ayer Rd—but these would be outsourced to create jobs). Leo Blair said Harvard and others can cooperate on Devens services (dispatch, DPW, etc). But the immediate benefits would come from cooperation with other towns—the Devens option will take longer to implement.
- Stu Sklar submitted positions from the Suburban Coalition Report: Towns should have the authority to contract unilaterally (without union's input) to change health care benefits. Petitioning home rule changes; petitioning for meals tax; asking state to rein in special ed budgets to 2% increase per year.
- George McKenna solicited public comment:
 - Debbie Ricci asked if there's a lower dollar amount for special ed circuit-breaker (yes, but it is not considered part of local aid); what are the warrant articles was can close (\$40,000-\$45,000); given we need quick fixes for 2009, we should bring library and other groups to the table.
- George McKenna solicited comment from committee members:
 - Terry Mead suggested highest priority is preserve school quality and public safety; therefore look at cutting library; COA (as it is not a mandate), then all other departments. Suggested keeping all salaries flat for 2010.
 - Lori Granville noted dispatch is low-hanging fruit; Peter Warren comment that you need a grant for the capital needs to establish a regional dispatch, and that police need to agree to it.
 - Steve Colwell said send budgets back to departments for 0% salary increases for 2010; Bob Thurston said maybe unions would volunteer to do that.
 - Marie Crowley Sobalvarro suggested looking at tiers of cuts for 2009: free cash, then stabilization funds, then payment in lieu of taxes, then ambulance billing receipts, then

- consolidate Boards of Health; then sharing equipment.
- Bob Thurston suggest not cutting everything so that we do everything badly, but picking sustainable cuts, eg, Library can run fewer hours; plow the roads a bit later, etc. We should do the one-time things, too (eg article closings).
 - George McKenna said he is not in favor of using emergency funds, because we should set those funds aside for 2010 when the situation could be even worse. We don't yet know what we'll have to spend in the next couple of months on snow removal, for example.
 - Ron Ricci: BoS should talk with JBoS in emergency mode; eg with Shirley re: sharing police (that can be done quickly). Cut library funding; share COA and Adult Ed with other towns. All town employees should have choice of layoff or salary freezes.
 - George McKenna: we need to look at steps and grades and how we negotiate contracts.
 - Marie Fagan asked about transfer station receipts—if we change to charge per car rather than household (and raise price, possible), will it affect 2009 receipts? (Yes).
 - Peter Warren would like all dept heads to re-submit their (2009) budgets with 15% cut.
 - George McKenna clarified that BoS has authority to order a budget freeze or cuts. Peter Warren, Tim Bragan, and Tom Jefferson agreed that asking dept heads for new budgets by Friday 23rd is do-able.
 - Leo Blair warned that the needed cuts will absolutely have to include layoffs. BoS will be guided by School Committee, Fin Comm.
 - Next Tri-Board meeting Sat 24th, 4:00 pm.
 - Move to adjourn at 8:52 pm.