

ALG Minutes

October 10, 2008

Present: Bart Wendell, Facilitator; Lauren Rosenzweig, Paulina Knibbe, BoS; Heather Harer, Jon Chinitz SC; Steve Noone, Herman Kabakoff, FC. Staff: Bill Ryan, Marie Altieri, and Steve Ledoux & John Murray.

Audience: Steve Barrett, Peter Ashton, Mary Ann Ashton, Dick Calandralla, C. Kadlec, Mr. Farquar & Kristina Buck.

6. Other

Herman asked that Terra's letter be discussed. Lauren said she wanted to talk about ALG communications.

1. Minutes Ok'd

2. Study of Revenue collections In comparable Towns

Presentation: Peter Ashton started off his presentation by saying he'd heard a rumor that he'd been paid for his services. He wanted everyone to know that was not true—if he had charged, the price would be \$20,000

The problems Peter faced is that ALG and the DOR/DOE present their financial data in different formats. The closest to Acton are Sudbury and Concord

Some towns take out fringe benefits and excluded debt while others do not. He has not finished his assignment; he still has to call some of the listed towns for their input. He noted that the Websites of the listed towns varied in quality.

The revenues that are split are the general revenues and some special revenues. But revolving and enterprise funds are not part of the split

The regional school district and schedule A needed special attention to get other towns in an ALG-like mode.

It appears that most towns do not have a formal ALG-like process for determining the split. In some cases it is the Town staff that make the determination.

Tax bills: Acton is above the average communities

Reserves: Acton is at the average

Levy as percent of revenue: Acton is slightly above the average [for every 100 residents 23 are school children]

State aid: Acton is well above the average due to Ch. 70 funds [Westford is the highest---they too have seen great increases in their school populations]

Charting the DOR

Average share for the town—school split is 37%- Sudbury & Westboro spend more; Dedham is the highest. Peter expects to ask why.

Herman asked if he was not tracking a socio-economic trend. Peter agreed saying that the attraction was Acton's good schools

Marie noted that the spending per pupil is lower—Bedford is the highest they have a student teacher ratio of 13-15/1

Town spending is 23% lower per capita

Discussion:

There was not much to discuss as everyone is waiting for the Governor's new budget numbers.

Marie did hand out a new revised sheet---and asked that the word "plan" be changed to "model"

The assumptions are that the only revenue increases will be in the levy

Steve N. Indicated that a new set of assumptions needed to be used and then a new model developed.

There were questions as to what the State Reps were saying. Rep. Cory Atkins---who has been accurate in the past---said the cycle will be three years.

John Murray said that inflation is running at 10% and the levy can only rise by 2.5%

Herman suggested that it is now time to talk to the unions & tell them we cannot afford 4% increases.

Bill said that on the school side he is just doing a maintenance budget & will see what happens with personnel "Level funding will put us in a hole—we just don't know what size.

Marie said she thought that the new model could be ready by November.

Bart got everyone to agree to that.

Extra info: Marie's handout

Task: Marie will revise the model

4. Budget Revenues & 5. Reserve use in FY 10 were not discussed

6. Other

Herman said he wanted to discuss "Terra's memo"—saying she had a very fertile mind & some very good ideas.

Jon Chinitz said that he can appreciate the time it took for Terra to get the thoughts together but the ALG was not the place to discuss the thoughts of one board member.

That member should take the message to her board & then that board should bring the thoughts to the entire ALG.

Herman pushed for the ALG to look at Terra's ideas about the unions.

Lauren said the BoS had a special meeting where the memo was discussed. Matters of collective bargaining are discussed in executive session—and not at ALG.

Paulina said that Terra had misunderstood the process that needs to be followed & that she is to take her ideas to her own board first.

Steven Noone added that the FC members always give him direction for the ALG.

Bart asked if that was clear

The meeting adjourned 9:05

Next meeting –October 27, 7:30 AM

Ann Chang