1. APPROVED BET Budget Comm. Consolidation Day Minutes

Documents:

APPROVED_BET_BUDGET_COMM_CONSOLIDATION_DAY_MINUTES_02-17-05.PDF
Ms. Storms called the meeting to order at 1 PM.

RETIREMENT BOARD

Mr. Simon discussed the history of the Retirement Board administration, including the doubling of staff. He said there is a need to tie objectives to staffing. Mr. Pagliaro replied that he wants to hire a consultant to review staffing requirements. There was discussion about whether a consultant is necessary.

There was also discussion about the Retirement Plans Coordinator position, which seems “out of control” and agreement that the activities connected with it need to be reviewed. Mr. Simon said there needs to be an SPD. Mr. Gomeau said that the data cleansing should be ended now; that they should get back to day-to-day administration of the plan.

Ms. Storms asked if there are functions that should be under Human Resources. Mr. Simon suggested that giving retirement advice and information to active employees who are not retired or about to retire belongs in HR. Mr. Gomeau said this is a benefits issue. There was further discussion about the job description and reporting relationships.

Mr. Walko questioned the legal fees in the Retirement Board budget and asked why they are not in the Law Department. Mr. Gomeau responded that John Wetmore approved the use of Shipman & Goodman and said they are doing administrative work analogous to labor relations, as well as addressing other legal issues such as treatment of military
service. Mr. Pagliari said he will review external vs internal legal services within 30 to 60 days.

Mr. Simon complained that funds appropriated for one use have been used for other purposes and then the funds are requested again. He said a consultant cannot straighten that out. Mr. Gomeau said he will come back in July with a plan for managing the office.

Mr. Simon questioned the following: the fee schedule, $48,000 for manuals, $25,000 for consultant, $12,000 for training, professional fees, $30,000 for document imaging, paying Diversified $90,000 a year vs. buying software. Discussion followed about the requirement to provide retirement statements under collective bargaining agreements.

A proposal was made to charge the Retirement Department for benefits in the amount of $41,000.

Mr. Gomeau, asked what plans there are to do retirement payment processing in-house, replied that he and Mr. Mynarski will look at it and put out an RFP.

**LAW DEPARTMENT**

Mr. Walko commented on case management software, Special Education litigation, and risk management. He said it seems like we haven’t moved an inch since last year and wondered if the department is being managed. He expected to see an annual or semi-annual list of cases. We do not know if the department is understaffed or overstuffed. A personnel discussion ensued. Mr. Walko then proposed a condition on a portion of the department’s budget. He will draft the condition requiring a progress report.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Ms. Storms discussed progress toward the use of benchmarks in setting staffing levels and suggested leaving the ’06 budget alone except for housekeeping matters. Mr. Simon said the superintendent needs to bring along his constituency; he needs to control and re-allocate.

Mr. Simon discussed the problem of BOE positions created with grant money for which the Town is being charged benefits. There was agreement that at least part of this expense should be included in the ’06 BOE budget and probably all of it in ’07.

A brief discussion of Hamilton Avenue and New Lebanon Schools’ enrollment followed, centered around whether, if the size of Hamilton Avenue is increased, there would be temptation to close New Lebanon later on.

**RECONCILIATION**
In a discussion about the schools’ budget, Mr. Walko suggested asking for a decrease in one-half of a position or a dollar decrease in the amount of the budget, because half of the Communications Officer position was added to the ’05 budget without an offset. Ms. Storms advised against such a move in favor of building on the trust gained so far this year with the BOE and looking at the much bigger picture, namely coming to an agreement on a formula for future budgets that will tie staffing to a declining enrollment.

Mr. Gieger will provide detail for Safe Routes projects in the capital budget.

The OPEB budget is still open. There was discussion of a blended rate for pharmacy expense.

Conditions: GEMS should come in twice a year; Fire Department, TNW, and Social Services – unnecessary for them to report to the BET as in ’05; DSS – we can always ask them to come back if we would like to talk to them; Retirement’s and Law Department’s budgets to be conditioned; Emergency Management to be deferred to next year.

Mr. Simon asked Mr. Gieger about savings in the new Wide Area Network.

There were questions about water rates.

In answer to Mr. Walko, Mr. Mynarski promised to deliver within the next week a 10-year financial forecast showing the effect of the proposed capital plan on the operating budget.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Berg, Recording Secretary

Valeria P. Storms, Chairman