

DRESDEN FINANCE COMMITTEE

Position on the Proposed Dresden School District Warrant for FY15 (2014-15)

The Dresden Finance Committee (DFC) consists of seven Hanover town residents (all appointed), including one Hanover Selectboard member representative and one Hanover School Board (HSB) member representative and seven Norwich town residents (six appointed; one elected), currently with five seats open.¹

The DFC's recommendation to the DSB and School administration at the beginning of the FY15 budget development process was that the Dresden School Board adopt a budget that provides for an increase in expenditures of no more than 3.5% for the coming year, FY 2014-2015.

The proposed budget for 2014-2015 falls within the guideline with a 2.74% increase in expenditures over the current year's budget.

During a public meeting on January 24, 2014, the Dresden Finance Committee (DFC) voted 7 to 1 to support the proposed FY15 (2014-2015) Dresden School District budget of \$24,043,434 (Warrant Article 6). The principal role of the DFC in the school budget process is advising the towns on the budget's affordability and fiscal prudence. Given that the budget met the DFC's expenditure guidelines, the Committee supports it, notwithstanding reservations which several DFC members have about the school budget process, as articulated by the minority below.

The minority opposed the budget for several reasons. First, the budgeting process is done on a budget-to-budget basis and not an actual-to-budget basis, thus the actual results are not factored into the next budget and can require more tax dollars to be raised than necessary. Second, the budget includes the increases in compensation and benefits for the teachers related to three-year teachers' contract, which the minority did not support. Negotiating annually can keep the momentum going to bring the more generous aspects of total compensation in line with other NH school districts. Third, one-time expenditures continue to be part of the annual budget. The FY14 technology budget included approximately \$100,000 of one-time expenditures. The FY15 budget was not reduced for these one-time expenditures but instead funds a new initiative to provide Chromebooks for every 9th grader.

The DFC voted 7 to 1 to support Warrant Article 2 for \$225,000 to construct a softball field and erect a shelter, among other improvements. The majority supported the Article as this funding would eliminate the safety issue that currently exists at the playing field.

The minority opposes making the field improvement a separate article on the warrant, thus allowing the budget to come within the corridor, when this expenditure should be included in the operating budget.

The DFC also voted unanimously to support all the remaining Articles on the Warrant.

¹ The members of the DFC are Kristi Fenner (Chair), Jay Buckey (Board of Selectmen representative), Mary Fowler, Michael Gerling, Cheryl Lindberg, Heidi Postupack, Jona Roberts (Dresden School Board representative), John Ruth, and Daryl Press.