

CALL TO ORDER/OPENING

Chair Rick Antanavica called the meeting to order at 6:10pm. Chair Rick Antanavica, Second Vice Chair Dianna Provencher, Selectman Herb Duggan Jr., Selectman John Bujak, Town Administrator David Genereux, and Executive Assistant Maria Cataloni were in attendance. Vice Chair Allen Phillips was absent.

1. NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion on Holding Joint FY24 Budget Workshop

Mr. Bujak stated he believes the Advisory Committee, Schools, and the Town should come together to review what can be cut and what can be salvaged. He said we need to make the best of the situation. He wonders if there are some funds that can be used creatively, as the schools are an economic engine for the Town. He said that the schools are up in arms trying to figure out how to keep things alive. Mr. Bujak stated that the residents have spoken overwhelmingly to not approve the override, and now the appropriate cuts need to be made.

Mr. Antanavica stated that there would need to be a date agreeable to all the boards. He stated there is money out there, but it is 1-time money which is what got the schools into this problem in the first place and things will have to be looked at to avoid just kicking the can down the road.

Mr. Bujak stated there needs to be time for Brett's plan to develop. He said there will be concessions and cuts, but there must be funds along with a 3-5 year plan for the entire town. Mr. Duggan stated we go department by department at the joint meeting. Mr. Antanavica stated the focus right now is to complete Borger by August which will free up \$72,000 in transportation costs. He said that various sports clinics are charging a lot of money to residents to play sports, and he would like to know what we are charging them for the facilities. Mr. Bujak stated any outside organization pays \$125 per hour. Mr. Antanavica stated his older son is coaching lacrosse in Auburn and they require that 50% of the kids signed up are Auburn residents or there is an \$8,000 fee. Mr. Bujak stated we are charging a fair rate of \$125 per hour plus utilities. Mr. Antanavica asked if these outside groups are making a lot of money and not having a lot of Leicester residents in the groups.

Ms. Provencher stated some residents asked her why the schools always threaten to take away sports. She stated it is not because they want to take sports away – sports are how kids learn teamwork – but she did not have an exact answer. If we have to go up a few dollars on the fees, we will do that if it can help keep the sports. Mr. Duggan stated that from a numbers perspective, cutting sports is necessary. Mr. Bujak stated there are non-negotiable fees when it comes to sports, like coaches' salaries, equipment, and officials' fees. Moderator Doug Belanger stated that Brett Kustigian explained why sports was chosen to be cut. The cost to cut only teachers would mean there are not enough teachers. It is not the preferred choice, but sports are discretionary.

Mr. Antanavica stated that it needs to be discussed with all 3 boards. He said if schools get cut people leave the school system and then property values go down, tax rates go up to maintain the money coming in. Mr. Bujak stated that unemployment is a non-negotiable cost.

Bob Mercer of the Advisory Committee asked what the cost is of failing the override. He stated there will be many costs including unemployment, school choice, and vocational fees. He said things will get tougher as the years go and younger kids start going to other school systems. Mr. Duggan states that he agrees with Mr. Mercer, and you have to look at all of the consequences. Mr. Mercer stated that in the end, the fight is over half a million dollars. Mr. Duggan stated that members of some boards on social media are feeding into the conspiracies, and people are forgetting that we are all human.

Mr. Bujak stated that he also agrees with Mr. Mercer and said there should be cuts on both sides as the schools cannot absorb everything. He said the Town needs to look at costs and not fill vacant positions. Mr. Mercer asked if the Town tried another override for a different amount, would it change the pecking order of sports programs. Mr. Duggan stated that priorities would have to be ranked. Mr. Mercer stated that residents in Town are talking about how smart Brett is and that he will figure things out, however, he has no money to do anything.

No action was taken by the Board.

b. Assistant Town Administrator Recruitment

Chair Antanavica stated that David should at least be able to interview for the vacant Assistant Town Administrator position. Mr. Bujak stated that efforts are better put towards crunching the numbers more and it is a non-starter to hire while the schools are making cuts. He said that kids in Town can see it

and ask how the Town can do that when there are no sports. Mr. Duggan stated Mr. Genereux is killing himself with the workload and he needs a break. Mr. Genereux stated that Ms. Cataloni's position is mainly dealing with the campus and bills. The position used to be part-time and now it has turned to full-time and mostly accounts payable work. He stated that on the other end he handles procurement and RFPs union contract negotiations. The things in the middle like insurance and human resources get lost. He stated that he does not want to hire while the school is making cuts, but balance is lost and the time is not there with a lot of requests from the Board. Mr. Duggan suggested taking a look at the Town Administrator goals and see what can be scaled back.

Resident Jeffrey Fisher stated that from a citizen's point-of-view, David had a full-time job and then the Town bought Becker. He said that after buying Becker the Town should have hired a project manager for the campus. Mr. Fisher stated Becker gave Mr. Genereux a second full-time job. Mr. Fisher stated he sent Mr. Genereux an email at 11:15 pm on a Saturday night and Mr. Fisher got a response back from Mr. Genereux by 6 am the next morning. Mr. Fisher said that if he were Dr. Kustigian, he would be contacting Uxbridge to see if they need a new superintendent and maybe David would look there also. He said that Mr. Genereux is working too much, and it is not fair. Mr. Duggan stated he would like to revisit the topic sooner rather than later because he worries for Mr. Genereux's health.

No action was taken by the Board.

c. Annual Town Meeting

Mr. Bujak explained that the Leicester Football Parents will be making a statement about a donation they received for the work.

Motion 051123-2c: A motion was made by Mr. Bujak and seconded by Ms. Provencher to pass over Article 2D at the Annual Town Meeting. **Motion carries 4:0:0 (Mr. Phillips absent).**

Motion 051123-3: A motion was made by Mr. Antanavica at 6:50pm and seconded by Mr. Duggan to move upstairs to join the Annual Town Meeting. **Motion carries 4:0:0 (Mr. Phillips absent).**

ADJOURN TO ANNUAL TOWN MEETING