

Date of Meeting Reported On: 1/11/18

Meeting: SC Budget Subcommittee

Present: Bob Grom, Wally Johnston, Laurie Hunter, June Rzepczynski, John Flaherty, John Hickling, Melissa McMorrow, Dean Banfield.

Wally chaired the meeting. Minutes for the 12/13/17 meeting were approved. This meeting was spent discussing the results of combining DESE data into reasonably comparable categories which might be used for meaningful benchmarking.

Transportation - Data is reported so differently, it's difficult to directly compare expenses between towns. The numbers calculated for C-C combined gave \$494 per pupil, which was about in the middle of the spread, but the spread is very large.

Transportation costs vary in a range of + or minus \$300/per pupil, even with the best attempts to see if each town includes SPED, METCO, extracurricular, etc. transportation expenses in "Transportation" and take it into account. It was proposed that an explanation of what drives our costs is still needed, even if it is qualitative, because residents want to understand. We should cover things which are choices (no fees here because they are so complicated to administrate it's not worthwhile), and which are out of our control (population, road miles, town area, etc.).

Teacher Contacts - Member was absent.

Technology - The topic is of great interest so needs to be covered, but once again, it looks like we need to discuss choices the town has made, how the costs are included in our budget, the state of our technology in comparison to other towns, etc. qualitatively. For instance Lincoln/Sudbury has very low costs, but has not modernized at all since their HS was constructed.

OPEB - Will be ready with pension contribution data comparison from a different database at next meeting. Some discussion of operating budget insurance costs.

Regional School comparisons - A good discussion was had on a rough draft of combined data from DESE and MassDoR for a comparison of towns now and across time:

DESE data categories - school enrollment, Capacity to fund foundation budget, 2016 MCAS scores, and one more.

MADoR data - looked at annualized compound growth for the last 5 years and last 10 years for each town for:

ave tax bill, ave home value, #Housing Units, ave per capita income, ave taxable new growth in the assessable buildings in town, overall population growth. Also compared Total Sq. Miles.

Want to include % of households using more than 30% of their income on housing as a measure of stress, but the member researching this was absent.

A few conclusions from the data -> CC property taxes have risen at a reasonable rate compared with other towns. Housing values inside 128 have recovered since the recession, but in towns

outside 128, growth is much slower however. Income growth in other towns is also much better than ours; we've been basically flat for the past 5 years. CC average population growth has been relatively higher than other towns, while school populations in all towns are pretty stable. Our housing stock hasn't been growing nearly as fast as some other towns, but new growth in assessable property has been really good in the last 5 years which compensated a bit. (Unfortunately, that will not continue into the near future.) One possible summary = property taxes have been rising at a steady 2.5%/year, while growth in personal income and home values has not come close to keeping up.

In general, now that the data has been researched, the committee has decided that it would be useful to develop a report, rather than simply presenting spreadsheet data with footnotes. People agreed that a useful way to approach things was to have a list of questions and issues that citizens have raised or are likely to raise and explain with the data, e.g., Boston Magazine and USN&WR rankings, choices we as a town have made that affect costs or rankings, etc. Two members volunteered to come up with a list. In addition, the missing data on teacher contracts, OPEB, and "housing stress" in each town will hopefully be obtained by next meeting. The focus of the next meeting will be on what researched benchmarking information to present and how to present it.

Next meeting is Thursday, January 18th at 3:30pm at CCHS, probably near the Learning Commons.