

**Dresden Finance Committee
Tracy Hall**

**Tuesday January 10, 2006
Norwich, VT**

Present: Athos Rassias, Bill Bender, Henry Scheier, Irv Thomae, Paul Tierney, Dick Podolec, Karen Kayen, Deb Hall, John Aubin, Wayne Gersen, Kari Asmus, Cheryl Lindberg, Mary Sachsse and John Hochreiter. In the audience: Robin Carpenter and Mary Sachsse, then joining the meeting at 8:55 Bob Bruce and at 9:15 John Chamberlin.

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 AM. By Chairman Rassias with a call to the rest of the committee for direction and advise relative to our timelines and process. Athos asked Superintendent Gersen when write-up were due to the printer and was told that it would be needed by the end of this month. Athos then suggested that we have an additional meeting on the 23rd, 24th, or the 25th of this month. He will get back to us with a suggestion.

Athos asked John Aubin for any changes or highlights. John responded that there was an error in the 6th Grade tuition presently stated on page 10 of the budget as \$1,454,501. This will be significantly higher which will be more income for Dresden.

Also the sabbatical was placed in the Hanover budget but the application has come from the High School this will be an additional expense of Dresden of approximately \$70,000.

John reported on the teacher settlement of COLA in the first year, COLA PLUS 1 IN THE SECOND YEAR AND IN THE THIRD. There is also a willingness to look at alternatives in health care providers. There is a meeting this week with teacher representatives and a proposed vendor to go over benefits. John estimates that this could save something in the area of \$200,000.

John's statement that "in general the net assessment to Dresden is going down." John followed with descriptions of items on page 9 of the budget and his notations on why the budget exceeds CPI. There was general discussion focusing on the comment that if health care costs go up at a typical 10% plus rate each year there is an advantage to giving CPU plus in salary and still coming out ahead. The discussion touched on many of the teachers being at the top of step and track, the likelihood of extracting any concession in contract terms and the agreement of the teachers to discussing an alternative to step and track. The teacher raises will likely fall between a minimum of 4% and a maximum of 5.25% in the salary increase side. This would be in addition to any step and track adjustments.

Wayne reported that there is to be a joint group put together to study an alternative to the traditional step and track system. Henry suggested strongly that

a member of the finance committee be a part of those discussions. Irv asked about the timing of implementation of the plan if a plan could be arrived at. Wayne said that it could be implemented in the third year of the current contract.

Dick Podolec needed to leave early and wanted to address some of his concerns. Dick passed out a handout of the DFC's goals, mission statement and opinions developed last year. Dick expressed his disappointment in the teacher settlement relative to the goals and noted a particular lack of balance in the concerns of the taxpayers.

Dick noted three particular issues:

1. The teacher settlement and its disregard for the goals set out by the DFC.
2. The lack of significant movement on cost sharing by the teachers on health care.
3. The continued premium paid to teachers of the district relative to other professions and other teachers salaries in the area.

John did respond that the contract does offer net savings in that if teachers participate in the more expensive plan provided they will pay the difference for that plan vs. the HMO plan also available. John pointed to net savings that will become available.

Cheryl asked what CPI figure was used? John told us that they use October to October Northeast Regional figure it was noted as 4.4% in October.

Paul wanted Dick to know before Dick left that he (Paul) was in complete agreement and would have probably not expressed it in as conservative a fashion.

There followed general discussion about the frustration in both the outcome and the process. The Budget does exceed CPI but due in large part to the situation with special education and additional salaries and benefits. The settlement agreement heightens that frustration.

Deb noted that we as the DFC need to educate the public on the teacher settlement and the premium that is being paid. Bill additionally noted that his particular frustration comes from a seeming disregard for the guidelines that the DFC offered. Henry, we need to express that dissatisfaction at the Dresden School Board Meeting tonight. Irv cautioned that we not get ahead of the community on this, or we may come across with little credibility.

Athos, what do we do or say tonight?

Mary asked that we couch the conversation of teacher contract and budget as separate issues.

The consensus of the group was to present our goals to the public and then our sense relative to the contract settlement. Cheryl asked that we include our

mission statement. Henry cautioned that any discussion needs to be held in terms of total compensation.

Irv reminded us of the extensive work that Kari did this past summer and here frustration in trying to compare like benefits in varying districts. There is very little like information available for comparison.

Henry asked for a consensus of the group.

Athos took a straw poll.

How many support the budget	2
How many do not support the budget	7
Abstaining	1

How many support the teacher contract	1
How many do not support the contract	8
Abstaining	1

Athos noted that the Phil Harrison had resigned his position on the Hanover Finance Committee and that Athos has had conversations with Willy Black about replacements for Phil and Mado, who had finished here term of office last fall.

Wayne asked that the Norwich Committee remain for an update on their matters and the meeting adjourned at approximately 9:50 AM.