

Cape Elizabeth Tax Cap Task Force

Aug 17, 2004

I. Meeting called to order at 7:12 PM.

II. **The minutes of the Aug 3 meeting** were approved with the correction on page 2, IV. Report of the school Revenue Committee: The 4th item should read ; "Athletic fees are intended to cover all the costs of the athletics program and including the cost of the Athletic Director whose salary is listed in another account."

III. Follow-up of items from the previous (8/3/04)meeting

1) Debt Service explanation in the revised Q&A document:

- Query to Michael McGovern as to the accuracy of the debt service figure in the explanation under the first item in column 1 of the Q&A. He said it was accurate as of this date, i.e., an additional \$1.50/\$1000 of assessed value.

2) Recommended library fees/charges:

- Jay Scherma, Head Librarian at Thomas Memorial Library, noted that by Maine statute, " free public libraries" are prohibited from charging for many library services that are central to the premise of a free library, i.e., charging for use of books, magazines, video materials, and other media or information normally thought to be available at a library.
- Jay also presented several handouts that suggested the possibility that certain statutes might put the library's funding outside of the jurisdiction of the Palesky referendum.
- After a brief discussion as to the legality and probability of excluding the library from the scope of the tax cap, Town Manager McGovern noted that many Maine statutes likely conflict with the tax cap. The Maine Attorney General and courts would no doubt have to render a number of judgments as to what was covered by the tax cap if it passed or not covered if excluded by a previous statute.
- If the tax cap passes, advocates for many services in towns (and schools) will appeal to town councils, town meetings, and school boards on behalf of their interests. Again, the state and local governments and courts will have to decide these conflicts..
- Jay Scherma provided the Task Force (TF) with possible revisions in the library budget should the tax cap pass.
- The library will continue to operate with reduced hours even if the tax cap passes though under a reduced budget and providing fewer services.

3) Family profiles: The Communications Committee is working on these.

IV. **Statements submitted via email by TF members** Anne Swift-Kayatta and Tom Egan:

- Ann said she would have Deborah Cabana email her synthesis of information about the Tax Cap to all TF members.
- Tom Egan had suggested that we provide more substantive detail where possible in the Q&A document. After a brief discussions of where such details might work best, the Communications Committee readily agreed to add detail where possible.

V. **Communications Committee Report:**

- On a motion made by Beth Currier and seconded by Rebecca Millett, the task Force unanimously accepted current draft of the Q&A document including future editing and revisions some of which are mentioned below.
- Web sites listed at the end of the Q&A will include the town's site and the Portland Press Herald's site.
- The committee will work with a graphic designer before printing the final Q&A draft.
- The costs are estimated to be approximately \$300 if the document can be printed using a town copier.
- There was an extended discussion about as to whether the town should pay for the costs of the Q&A.
- The task Force concluded that since the Q&A was balanced, informative, and part of the Task Force's report to the community, it will be duplicated by the town for inclusion in the **Courier** and the town will cover expenses just as it would for reports from any other town committee or special project.
- The Q&A will be an insert in the **Cape Courier** in early September.

VI. **Letters to the editor and final Task Force report:**

- After considerable discussion, TF members decided that all persuasive writings by members should occur after the TF completes its work.
- Because time for getting persuasive writings into local papers will be very short in September and October, there was some sentiment that the TF should make tonight's meeting its final meeting.
- There was an extended discussion of just what should be the nature of the final report of the TF and how this final report, whatever the form, could be approved by the TF if this meeting were its last.
- There was also discussion of a concern of many TF members that approval of the Tax Cap would remove almost all 'local control' over finances from town citizens and their government. This issue is not emphasized in the Q&A nor elsewhere in the materials that will represent the work of the TF. However, it's possible that some voters may be in favor of just such a "loss of local control over finances" and that this issue, like the issue of the tax cap's effect on town finances, is controversial. Thus, the TF took no position on the issue of 'local control' just as it has not taken a position on whether the tax cap will be good or bad for the town. However, it should be well publicized so citizens are aware of this factor.

VII. **Final Report:** Discussion on this item concluded that

- The final "report" will be a large binder including an executive summary, the minutes of our meetings, and the various documents, reports and recommendations of committees, correspondence and articles the TF members received as they went about their deliberations.
- Town Manager Michael McGovern will draft an executive summary to be revised by co-chairs Steve Simonds and Seth Brewster.
- The TF will meet for the final time on Tuesday Aug 31 at 7PM to accept the executive summary and approve its final report.

Notes submitted by Frank Miles. **Final meeting : August 31 at 7 PM in the Council chambers.**