Joint City/School Board Committee  
September 19, 2008

Board members present: Kassandra Ardinger, Christopher Casko, Martin Honigberg, Elizabeth Hoadley, Jennifer Patterson

District administrators: Rob Prohl, Matt Cashman, Larry Prince

City: City Manager Tom Aspell, Mayor Jim Bouley, City of Concord HR Director Jim Howard, Norm O’Neill of the city’s HR department, Mike Martin, Merrimack Valley Superintendent, Robin Hines, Business Administrator

The meeting began at 7:30 a.m.

I. Tax Cap Overview
Jim Howard discussed the tax cap, noting that although the law excludes the school district, Franklin and Laconia include the school budget in absorbing the cap. He explained that the tax cap works by limiting the city’s amount that can be raised by taxes by the amount raised in the previous year, multiplied by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Annual revaluations of property are included. The override provision requires a two-thirds vote of the full governing body. Mr. Howard noted that Concord has been above the CPI in the last 5 to 6 years. If passed in Concord, the law would affect the 2011 fiscal year. He noted that after Proposition 2 ½ passed in Massachusetts, many towns’ bond ratings dropped by 2 to 2 ½ points. Concord’s bond rating is currently AA-2 (the highest in NH) but it will probably drop, and that will affect the school district.

II. Tax Rate Setting Schedule
Jim Howard noted that the city assessor will get the valuations into DRA by 10/22 and Concord School District will get that number that same day. The September real growth report is +1.156%, although the actual assessed value was not yet available. The goal for the city is to get the whole package into DRA by 10/31. Mr. Howard requested that the School Board hold its meeting to finalize the 08-09 budget between 10/23 and 10/30.

III. City Energy Committee activities
Jim Howard noted that the city wants the Concord community to participate in the EPA Energy Challenge. He informed the committee that the EPA Regional Energy team will make its presentation on 10/24 at 10 a.m. Under this challenge, the city will assess proposals to determine if they have economic value (i.e. not more expensive than the energy savings they accrue).

IV. CSD Transportation Costs
Matt Cashman informed the committee that Terry Crotty is the new district transportation director. He noted that the district is teaching its bus drivers energy-saving driving techniques. Mr. Crotty will try again to consolidate some bus routes and assess the total miles and costs of routes.
V. City Labor Contracts
Tom Aspell described the “Condry Report,” a re-evaluation of wage schedules. The city has both merit step and COLA step systems. The Council felt the steps were too steep at 3% and wanted to bring them down to 2 to 2½ %. The Council felt that certain positions (e.g. undercover detectives) should be structured differently to attract better candidates. Their pay was too low, so the top step was made higher. Ultimately, the wage schedules were given smaller steps, more steps, and a wider range. Some employees got more, some got less. Overall, the changes to the steps cost the city a 1 ½ % increase.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 a.m.

Rob Prohl, Recorder

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9/30/08