

**TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
BUDGET/MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Town Hall Council Chambers
May 1, 2007**

Present: Kenneth J. DiFazio, Chairperson
Paul J. Leary, Vice Chairperson
Sue Kay
Patrick O'Connor
Michael Molisse

Also Present: Karen J. Berry, School Committee
Sean Guilfoyle, School Committee Chairperson
Joseph Rull, Superintendent
Dick Swanson, Auditor

Recording Secretary: Janet Murray

Chairman DiFazio called the Budget/Management Committee Meeting to order at 6:45pm.

Review/Discussion on School Department Detailed Budget with School Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents and Senior Staff

Mary Jo Livingston and Karen Berry presented the School Department detailed budget.

Mrs. Berry gave an overview of the school department's vision for FY 08.

Ms. Livingstone stated that \$56 million was the initial amount requested. The department was asked to make a \$502,300 reduction. The current request for FY 08 is \$55,966,070. This is a 2.5 % increase over FY 07.

Ms. Livingstone noted that there has been an increase in Special Education. The School Department is attempting to maintain appropriate class sizes. She noted the following points of interest within the presentation:

- 1 FT position at Hamilton
- ½ position in Kindergarten at Nash
- 1 position in Career and technical education – split between sheet metal and architectural drawing.
- Grade 2 teacher at Nash – covered by moving a teacher from Murphy
- Creation of a smaller learning community – cannot fund salaried teacher's position with grant money. Funding is for orientation and staff training. It also includes funding for materials.
- Use more data when decisions are made
- Literary/Reading specialist at each primary school – Wessagussett and Hamilton would benefit the most
- Mathematics need at Intermediate School – specialist at each school. Act as a coach.
- \$280,000 for textbooks

- ABA – applied behavior analysis – contracted service is very expensive – develop own staff similar to what happened with occupational and physical therapy.
- Bus Contract – First Student is merging with Laidlaw. There is no other bidder. The transportation cost bid saw an increase of 20%. She also noted that gasoline prices have increased as well as insurance costs.
- Licensing for technology which was originally included in the building project budget but now must be paid out of the operating budget.
- Student and staff information management/tracking system – replace Redeker with X2. There will be an increase in costs in the first year for data conversion, and other one time costs. In a normal year the cost will be \$60,000.

There was lengthy discussion regarding the “questions/comments on proposed FY 08 School Department Budget/May 1, 2007.

Ms. Livingstone noted that the proposed budget is the product of teamwork between the current Superintendent and the incoming Superintendent. She noted that the department is working with this budget but with the expected \$625,000 cut in Chapter 70 more cuts were expected; however, the Mayor has indicated that the schools would need to cut approximately \$250,000 if the expected cuts do in fact occur.

Ms. Livingstone noted that there are parent councils and school councils. School councils are advisory groups who advise the building principals on a number of issues. A school council is comprised of teachers, parents, community representatives and at the high school level, students. Parent councils are school based and generally handle fund raising and student activities.

Ms. Livingstone stated that there are no salary increases included in the FY 08 budget.

Ms. Livingstone stated that “Grade Nine Academies” are small learning communities at the high school level. The number of students in this program ranges from 100-125 depending upon the number of teachers.

Ms. Livingstone noted that Seach School will have a social worker added to their staff. This is the result of an increased number of behavior referrals.

Ms. Livingstone stated that there is a difference between a school council and parent council. School councils have a broader reach and include teachers and community members as well as parents. They help with development of budgets and school improvement plans. Parent councils tend to focus on fund raising and student activities.

Ms. Livingstone noted that there are no activity fee increases. She noted that there is currently no charge for extracurricular activities.

Ms. Livingston stated that the grant manager has worked diligently to seek grants. She noted that obtaining grants is done nationwide and is very competitive. She noted that grants are being funded at the lower levels. All money awarded is expended in the year it is received.

Ms. Livingstone distributed a copy of a spreadsheet on the Retired Teacher Health Insurance.

Ms. Livingstone noted that the wiring project at Johnson should be funded by the end of the year. The four main projects are the Hamilton roof, Adams roof, Chapman renovations, and Pingree waterproofing projects-which are covered under a \$2.6 million bond. The projects are out for bid. She noted that with the recent problems at Chapman this is subject to change.

Ms. Livingstone noted that the need for lighting and ceilings at the high school is for the maroon side of the building.

Ms. Livingstone stated that the circuit breaker percentage for FY 07 and 08 is 72%. She stated that the town received \$1,968,924.

Ms. Livingstone stated that the secretary position for Maintenance Operations is an office professional position which has more office responsibilities such as tracking utility usage, overseeing of custodial sick time and overtime, and overseeing quotes and bid documents.

Ms. Livingstone noted that the custodial/maintenance overtime is not extra hour overtime. It is for coverage of vacation and sick time.

Ms. Livingstone reviewed utility costs; 1) oil is set at \$2.74 until 8/07. The vendor is Burke Oil. She noted that the town will be able to top off the tanks at the lower rate before the rate increase; 2) the electricity rate is set until 2009, \$.155 per kilowatt , 3) natural gas is set at \$1.53 per therm until 6/08. The vendor is Direct Energy. The oil rate contract is usually for one year.

Ms. Livingstone stated that the drop in building security has to do with Atlas Alarm's insufficient staffing levels.

Ms. Livingstone noted that a portion of the increase in the District Info Management and Tech is for year one implementation of X2. This line also includes Connect-Ed.

At 8:36 pm, there being no further business, a MOTION was made by Councilor Leary to ADJOURN and was seconded by Councilor Kay and UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Approved by: _____
Kenneth J. DiFazio, Chairperson