

JOINT MEETING  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE and  
BUDGET/MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
Town Hall Council Chambers  
May 9, 2006 - Thursday  
6:45 PM

Present for Budget Management Comm.:      Kenneth DiFazio, Chairperson  
Susan Kay  
Paul J. Leary  
Michael Molisse

Present for Education Committee:          Jack Carey  
Kenneth DiFazio  
Paul J. Leary

Not Present    Patrick O'Connor  
Kevin Whitaker

Also Present:                                      Jane Hackett, Chief of Staff  
James Wilson, Chief Financial Officer  
Richard Swanson, Town Auditor  
Sean Guilfoyle, Chair/School Committee  
Karen Berry, Vice Chair/ School Committee  
James Parker, Member/School Committee  
James Lockhead, Member/ School Committee  
Joe Rull, Superintendent of Schools  
Mary Jo Livingstone, Asst. Supt. of Schools  
Leo Egan, Asst. Supt. of Schools  
Ellen Varnerin, Director of Special Education  
Tom Slattery, Director of Maintenance

Recording Secretary:                              Mary Briggs

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

The purpose of the meeting is a Review and Discussion of Fiscal Year 2007 School Budget, inclusive of:

**06 039 – Operating Measure – General Fund Appropriation Request – FY07 Annual Budget and Review of Retired Teacher Health Insurance Analysis 2000-2007-**

Chairman DiFazio reported that the School Department would present an overview of the budget, and similar to last year's format, a list of questions prepared by Auditor Swanson would be presented, as well as any subsequent questions from the Committees.

Sean Guilfoyle, Chairperson of the School Committee and Karen Berry, Vice Chairperson addressed the Committees. Ms. Berry presented an overview of the process the School Committee and School Administration used to prepare the budget. She acknowledged it was a very difficult budget season, with revisions made to the budget twice before presenting a budget that would be supported to the town. The budget ultimately submitted represents a 2.53% increase over last year's figure, but does not adequately address the needs of students or staff. She then turned over the presentation to Superintendent Rull and Assistant Superintendent Livingstone.

Upon his arrival at 6:55 PM, Chairman Carey called the Education Committee Meeting to order.

Mr. Rull conducted a history of the formulation of the School budget. The process was initiated in November, and inclusive of all cost centers. In addition, the School Committee has adopted a 5-Year Strategic Plan, and aligned the budget to the goals of the Plan. (A copy of the Plan is available on the school web site.)

The original, revised, and submitted versions of the budget were all prepared with the primary focus on classroom and teaching, and with four driving factors:

- Maintain appropriate class size
- Adequately fund utilities
- Address Collective Bargaining Agreements and negotiated contracts
- Offset staff reductions through retirements

When it was apparent that reductions would need to be made to meet the final budget, a tiered approach was used, spreading reductions across all levels, but attempting the least impact to the classroom and teaching. Mr. Rull thanked Ms. Livingstone, School Administrators and the School Committee for the work on the budget. Two public hearings were conducted, including one held on the amount ultimately submitted.

Ms. Livingstone narrated a power point presentation to the Committees, which included the personnel breakout, including contractual and step obligations, a net savings of \$26,000 of teacher retirements versus hiring replacements, the elimination of 1 teacher salary to the revolving fund at Johnson (there is a sufficient build up through revenues approximately every 2-3 years which enables funding one teaching salary.), eliminating 3 middle school teaching positions, 1 high school teaching position, 2 support personnel, 1 custodian, and 1 van monitor. A reduction will be made in custodial overtime, and the pre-assigned substitute positions at the primary schools will be eliminated.

Ms. Livingstone reviewed the process in projected utility costs, based on usage figures from FY05, which is the only fully comparable year, and taking into consideration the new

construction at the High School. She reviewed each of the utilities. The kilowatt price of electricity (delivery cost), is an estimate of 13¢ per kilowatt hour (actual was 12¢ in FY06). \$2 per gallon is the estimated figure for fuel oil. This is a consortium bid with several Norfolk County communities participating. Fuel oil is under-funded in the current fiscal year. Natural gas pricing will have a greater impact in the next year, since 40% of the new High School is heated by gas. The School Department is looking into collaborative bidding or utilizing OSD bidding, and will be assisted in this by Jim Keefe in Procurement, and Mr. Wilson.

Water and sewer and telephones are showing rate reductions, due to the addition of low-flow fixtures and an e-rate credit pursued for the telephone services.

Cuts to services include a 10% to operational services at the high school, 8% at each of the middle schools, \$50,000 in maintenance, a one-time \$50,000 charge to the Food Services revolving account, \$240,000 in instructional materials, and a change in fee structure to Athletics and transportation (to offset a contractual increase).

There was a brief discussion at this point, regarding SPED funding, *Circuit Breaker* reimbursement, and transportation contract, which is due to finish a 5-year contract in FY07, and an explanation of the Food Services department charges for utilities, custodial services, and use of facilities.

Auditor Richard Swanson provided a list of 42 questions to the School Department, and he acknowledged many of them were addressed already in the presentation.

Some of the questions discussed:

Number of personnel in the budget; it does not include non-appointed personnel.

Whether all CBA's were factored in; 2 units were not settled, and were not in the original budget, but settled during the process and included in the final submission.

Whether personnel reductions would be addressed by layoffs; 1 position moved to a revolving fund, with the hope to address the others through attrition.

Number, type and location, and adequacy of security personnel; there is a security liaison and 4 paraprofessionals at the High School, as well as a resource (police) officer, funded through the police department budget. Superintendent Rull noted that the High School originally requested additional personnel which could not be supported in the budget, but also noted that the High School facility is a large campus with many after school activities. Ms. Livingstone also noted that there are 100 security cameras installed inside and outside the facility, and that every school building has some level of security.

Mr. Swanson asked what role watchmen played, and if it was different from security. Watchmen make rounds checking security of buildings on nights and weekends.

Mr. Swanson asked if the department had ever done an analysis of the role of the secretaries and if any of the 40 positions could be combined. Ms. Livingstone noted that the term “secretary” is somewhat of a misnomer, since most School Department secretarial duties involve more than memo typing. They are responsible for bill payments, utility projections, payroll processing, accounting and data base tracking, and grant writing support. No consideration was given to combining positions, since reductions were taken during reorganization of the department a few years ago.

Mr. Swanson asked for an explanation of the role of the Outside Placement Liaison. Ms. Livingstone explained that children who are placed outside the district, for particular special needs programs which Weymouth is unable to offer, are overseen by the liaison and 2 other SPED professionals.

Mr. Swanson asked about the number of computer technology personnel on staff- 1 director and 2 technicians who oversee 2600 computers.

He also reviewed the maintenance personnel, and whether they did work outside of the School Department. Mr. Slattery, who was in the audience, responded on behalf of the School Department- that for the majority of the time, the maintenance crew works within the schools; however, they have been used for town projects, such as the renovations at the McCulloch building.

(Mr. Rull at this time also introduced Ellen Varnerin, who is the School Department Director of Special Education, and Dr. Leo Egan, Assistant Superintendent who were in attendance as well as Mr. Slattery.)

Mr. Swanson asked if the School Department had considered merging vehicle maintenance with the DPW, similar to what’s been done at the maintenance level, as a cost savings measure. Ms. Hackett noted that the DPW is in the process of an operational review, so currently there is no consolidation plan. She also noted that since there are different CBA’s involved, any change would impact bargaining. Mr. Slattery noted that the departments will cooperate; if there is a backlog of work which needs to be done, vehicles will be worked on at the school maintenance garage.

Mr. Swanson asked for clarification of utility rate projection-current “run rates” used, and a breakdown of the utility contracts. Ms. Livingstone noted that FY05 was the year used to base projection, and did not include run rates, but the weather impact. She noted that the department is under the Town’s contract for the supplying of electricity from Suez, the Norfolk County South Shore Collaborative contract for fuel oil, and that natural gas has not been bid yet, and the department is paying market rates.

Mr. Swanson asked if there were any state contract available for utilities. Ms. Livingstone reported that in order to get on OSD contracts, consumption data would have had to be supplied

prior to the state going out on RFP.

Mr. Swanson asked about the payroll reduction of 27 positions. Ms. Livingstone noted this is “reverse breakage”. Chairman DiFazio asked if the number of retirements expected is considered high, and if there is any alarm over the quality of teaching with a high retirement rate. Mr. Rull responded that it is; last year there were 27 retirements and this year they anticipate approximately 32. There is no notification clause, and this is the first year without an accelerated payment clause. He also noted that the department is actively recruiting replacement teachers and has a mentoring policy in place. He felt there is a good mix of experience in new and seasoned teachers.

Mr. Swanson asked if the Altiris program was being maintained to track and inventory computer equipment. Ms. Livingstone responded that it is tracked- provided the equipment is networked.

Mr. Swanson asked if there is a request for additional equipment in the proposed budget. Ms. Livingstone noted that the FY07 request is part of the Capital Budget request. In FY05 \$1 million was requested from capital for equipment in the new High School, and \$125,000 to set up workstations in the middle schools. There is a request in for the primary schools.

Mr. Swanson asked if there was a fuel surcharge, which Ms. Livingstone reported on. Rates were set with the 5-year contract with First Student, but whenever the price of fuel goes above a rate set in the original contract, a surcharge is passed on.

Councilor Kay asked where the buses were fueled and stored. Ms. Livingstone responded that they gassed up at the depot where they are stored in Abington.

Mr. Swanson asked for clarification of grant funds. Ms. Livingstone noted that there is a grants manager and secretary. There was some discussion of the difference between grants, entitlement and competitive, and awards and donations. Mr. Swanson noted that the Town Council is required to approve all donations over a certain amount, and asked if the School Department was subject to that also. There was a discussion on whether student populations affect grant funding.

There was a brief discussion on the revolving accounts, including the lunch program, and whether expenses ever exceed revenues. Mr. Swanson noted that in some cases, expenses exceeded revenues, and asked if that was a timing issue. Ms. Livingstone noted that carry-overs may make it appear so, but overall, none exceeds available funds.

He also asked if the lunch program should be a break-even line, but notes it has a huge balance. Ms. Livingstone explained that a lunch price increase went into effect this year, and a surplus is deliberately projected to cover the next few years as the program costs (labor and materials) continue to increase and the lunch price remains the same. Lunch prices do not generally increase each year.

Mr. Swanson asked who determines how gift accounts are spent. Ms. Livingstone responded that

each school, and many programs have their own gift accounts, and the spending authority within each department determines the approval process.

Mr. Swanson asked about funding the payrider bus program. Ms. Livingstone reported that it was funded by both an appropriation and revolving from revenues. Encumbrances to the appropriation are spent first, and then the revolving.

He also asked about the Career and Technical Education account, and Ms. Livingstone noted that once a student has finished the schoolwork part of vocational education, there are certification and board requirements. The account allows for tuition of these students who need to earn many hours towards certification.

Mr. Swanson reviewed the capital improvement projects. He asked if the School Department put forward a request for capital improvement funding in FY06. Ms. Livingstone reminded him that capital requests in FY06 were not funded, and were moved to the FY07 request. The only project which has gone forward is the boiler replacement project at Chapman Middle School, which is anticipated to be partially funded from the Host Community Agreement. Other projects already presented to Budget/ Management Committee include the Hamilton roof, Pingree masonry, Adams roof, Chapman masonry, and duct cleaning-- \$2.6 million in requests to be bonded.

Under the discussion of capital projects, Councilor Carey asked if there is anything in capital projects for maintenance of the new athletic field/track at the High School. Mr. Slattery noted it should not need any maintenance for 5-7 years. Councilor Carey asked if there were plans to irrigate the new fields. Mr. Slattery responded that the new baseball field has irrigation, which is done automatically during the hours of 10 pm-5:30 am. Mr. Rull reported that the recent accreditation of the High School (the report is available online at the school website), one of the points stressed is need for continued commitment to the facility by the community.

Councilor DiFazio noted that remaining funds from the High School project were intended to be used for univent work, but the ceiling tile and light replacement in the corridors at the High School were not included. It appears to be a priority. Mr. Rull responded it was a priority but was not approved for funding in the current round of capital requests.

There was some discussion of the maintenance budget, which includes two years of salary increases, due to contract settlement. Mr. Swanson asked about summer help; Ms. Livingstone noted that the department hires 4 students, at \$13 per hour, for 8-10 weeks per year. There was also discussion of custodial and maintenance overtime, which has been decreased by \$10,000 in the proposed budget. Overtime covers custodial vacations taken during the school year, coverage for sick time, and work details for school activities.

He noted the \$240,000 cut in textbook supplies, and Ms. Livingstone noted that if any supplemental funds should become available, it would be their recommendation to the School Committee to restore this funding.

At 8:20 PM, Councilor Kay left the meeting.

Mr. Swanson had no questions concerning the athletic, IT or professional development budgets. Councilor DiFazio noted the \$35 increase in the payrider fees.

Mr. Swanson questioned the \$80,000 stipend in the Special Education budget; which covers summer tutoring stipulated in student Individual Education Plans.

There was a brief explanation by Ms. Livingstone of the Circuit Breaker program, and how quarterly reimbursements are received. Mr. Swanson noted that the SPED budget is relatively flat, as is most of the department budget.

**\*\*Review of Retired Teacher Health Insurance Analysis 2000-2007 –**

Mr. Swanson asked if the assessment from the commonwealth was reviewed, and if the number of Weymouth retirees is accurate. Ms. Livingstone responded that she was unable to verify each name, and cannot match what the state has assessed. The Group Insurance Commission supplies her yearly with a list. The list includes retired teachers and some spouses. When she figures out the premiums for all, not including the life insurance, the number she comes out to is less than the state assessment. She did note the assessment is coming down, but does not match her projection.

Councilor Leary asked how close it figured compared to the Cherry Sheets. Ms. Livingstone noted that the assessment is \$3.3 million, and Weymouth figured on \$2.7 million. There was a brief discussion, and the Committees will request the municipal side investigate how the state calculates the assessment.

Mr. Rull reinforced to the Committees that the reduction taken in the textbook/supplies line of \$240,000 will only be able to be supported this one time; if any supplemental money should become available, the School Committee has already agreed it will go to reinstating those funds.

Councilor Molisse asked what the Health Services line includes. Ms. Livingstone reported that this includes the Coordinator of Nursing Services, and the expense line is for supplies. The school nurse salary is based on the education contract, and is included in each building budget, other than the Murphy School, which will be entitled to Title One funding to pay for the nurse next year, and two nurses who are paid through grants.

Councilor DiFazio noted that there may be additional meetings scheduled as needed while the budget process is underway, and members of the School Department may be asked to appear again. He noted that in his opinion, the School Committee and School Department has provided the best thought-out presentation, which did not require a lot of questioning from the Committees. He noted this is a 180° turn in the last few years. He thanked them, and Mr. Rull noted it was Ms. Livingstone as Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance to whom the

credit should go for the presentation.

At 8:40 pm, there being no further business, Councilor Carey made a motion to adjourn the Budget/ Management Committee meeting, and was seconded by Councilor Leary. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

At 8:40 pm, there being no further business, Councilor Leary made a motion to adjourn the Education Committee meeting, and was seconded by Councilor Molisse. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.