

Date: November 10, 2007  
 Subject: Sudbury Budget Review Task Force Minutes from November 5, 2007  
 From: T. Dufault  
 To: Bob Jacobson, Co Chairman  
 Marty Ragonas, Co Chairman

List:

Members in Attendance (marked by √)	Guests in Attendance
√ Robert N. Jacobson, Co-Chair	Dr. John Brackett, SPS Superintendent
√ Martha M. Ragonas, Co Chair	Debbie Dixson, SPS Dir. Special Education
√ William E. Kneeland, Jr., FinCom	Mary Will, SPS Dir Finance
<b>A</b> Ralph F. Verni, FinCom	Susan Iuliano, SPS Chair
√ Miner A. Crary, Citizen	Charles Woodard, FinCom Chair
√ Daniel C. Difelice, Citizen	Jamie Gossels, FinCom
√ Tammie Dufault, Citizen	
√ Paul Fuhrman, Citizen	
√ Paul C. Gannon, Citizen	
√ Robert C. Haarde, Citizen (arrived 7:40)	
√ Karen Massey, Citizen	
√ Sabino (Sam) Merra, Citizen	
√ Lawrence W. O'Brien, Selectmen	
√ Paul E. Pakos, Citizen	
√ Jeffrey Beeler, Member SSC	
√ Bill Braun, Member SSC	
√ Jack Ryan, LSRHS	

“Committee in these meeting minutes refers to Sudbury Budget Review Task Force”

**Minutes:**

- 1) Meeting was called to session by M. Ragonas 7:35 p.m. All committee members present, with exception of those noted above as **A** (Absent). Guests for this meeting noted above. All participants introduced themselves.
- 2) Distribution of documents to all attending:
  - a. Agenda for today’s meeting (attachment A),
  - b. No Minutes were presented due to short time between meetings, these will be presented at next meeting,
  - c. From Dr. Brackett’s team (attachment B):
    - i. Benchmarking information (Attached): District Enrollment, Expenditures, etc.
- 3) M. Ragonas opened the meeting and turned discussion to Dr. Brackett to present. Dr. Brackett expressed appreciation members of BRTF and their mission, he also encouraged all attendees to ask question and continue round-table format.
- 4) Dr. Brackett opened discussion on Benchmarking handout. Benchmarking is usually done with similar K-8 towns with similar demographics.
  - a. Benchmarking School Systems usually include Concord, Southborough, Carlisle, and Northborough. Other benchmarking data is also provided to the BRTF, although from Districts other than K-8s. Benchmarking considerations also include enrollment trends.
  - b. Schools having K-12: Wayland, Lexington. 9-12: LSRHS and Acton Boxborough.

- c. Elementary is less expensive than Middle School to educate. Middle School curriculum is more diverse and content oriented.
  - d. MCAS compared to all districts because it is grade specific.
- 5) Dr. Brackett comments that SPS experienced small decline for first time in many years in enrollment. In his opinion, economic / real estate downturn responsible for no increase in student population this year.
- 6) Ms. Dixon presented some highlight of specifics on SPS special education program:
- a. Enrollment of children with program is 14-15% of total students (570 of 3300 students) and 22% of budget (gross expenditures before credits).
  - b. Eligibility determined by special review in accord with State and Federal law. Ms. Dixon confirms eligibility determination has a subjective component. Recent years increase in diagnosis of autism has had significant impact.
  - c. Ms. Dixon advises challenges on establishing program for child when needs are determined. She also explained process when parents disagree with determination.
  - d. State reimbursement program (Circuit Breaker) formula does not include transportation costs
    - i. Formula is spending per child less \$33,700 = X. X times 75% is reimbursed.
      - 1. Example: if spending is \$80,000. Formula  $80,000 - 33,700 = 46,300$ .  $46,300 * 75\% = \$34,725$  reimbursed.
    - ii. Mandate does not include discretionary spending. (Don't know what this means. Suggest it be stricken of replaced with "The Circuit Breaker formula covers costs attributable to student's program, except transportation.")
- 7) Discussion turns to salary / class size benchmarking information:
- a. Dr. Brackett advises SPS has strong belief in teacher support and investment in its teachers. SPS wants to develop its teacher with expectations they will stay within the district. Significant spending on entry-level teacher. BRTF member comments about challenges that they come to our school system to have gain from this investment, and then leave to another district.
  - b. BRTF member inquires if all towns have K-8 benefits charged to town. Another member inquires if benchmarking data includes healthcare for all compared communities. (*ACTION ITEM: Dr. Brackett*)
  - c. Retirements of 3 – 5 teachers per year, higher some years back yet has stabilized.
  - d. R. Jacobson comments that the metro west communities typically has higher compensation package. Pros and cons of this if metro west were to change its compensation strategies (not limited to salary).
  - e. Class size guidelines (redistricting of elementary students when necessary):
    - i. Kindergarten: 20
    - ii. Grades 1 and 2 : 22
    - iii. Grades 3-8: 24
  - f. Discussion on guidelines of class size, comments of class size standards, SPS vs. Teacher Contract, and their unknown variances.
  - g. BRTF member inquires as expenditures per student, benchmarking with / without benefits / SPED influence, etc.
  - h. Bus Service outsourced to independent contractor.
- 8) Discussion evolves to structural deficit discussion:
- a. Article recently distributed by R. Jacobson, "*Municipal Meltdown*" Gabrielle Gurley, [www.massinc.org](http://www.massinc.org).
  - b. Local aid significantly fluctuated beginning in 2001.
  - c. BRTF member inquires as to budget philosophy and trends compared to students.
  - d. J. Ryan comments about increasing utility costs. State aid needs to increase, perhaps one consideration of the BRTF should be legislation.
    - i. BRTF member refers to recently provided Standard & Poor's report on Sudbury in that we are in 292% of per capita. Comments Sudbury would not likely experience significant benefit from legislative changes.
  - e. BRTF member inquires as to determination of teacher assistant and in review of teacher contract, how is it determined on teacher assistant.
    - i. Dr. Brackett advises not all classrooms have assistant and SPED IEP's drive where SPED assistants are placed. K and 1<sup>st</sup> Grade assistant placements are straight forward and they are part-time at these grade levels. Each school has 1 other teaching assistant that is assigned by the school Principal.

- f. BRTF member inquires as to Preschool Program mandates:
  - i. Dr. Brackett advises that state requires that we are responsible to provide any child over 3 years old, identified with a special needs program. The evaluation process starts at age 2.5. Alternative is to send to another school, yet in-house programs typically are more cost effective. SPS offers an integrated pre-school program, which allows non-special needs children pre-school opportunities; these are fee based to parents, though Dr. Brackett states the fees offset costs associated with the program and without them the program would be significantly more costly to operate.
- 9) Following expressions of appreciation to Dr. Brackett, Ms. Dixon, Ms. Will, and L. O'Brien made motion for meeting adjournment, R. Jacobson second motion. Meeting was adjourned, 9:45 pm.
- 10) Next Sudbury Budget Review Task Force meeting, Monday, November 26, 7:30 EST Flynn Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor.