

Town of Sudbury ~ Finance Committee
Minutes of Meeting
Thursday – January 13, 2005
Lower Town Hall – 7:30pm

Present: Co-Chairs Bob Jacobson and Marty Ragones, Tracy Billig, Norman DeLuca, Michael Grosberg, Bill Kneeland, Larry Rowe, John Nikula, Sheila Stewart. Also present: Suzanne Petersen, Finance Director, and Robin Porcella, Recording Secretary.

Item 1: Opening Remarks:

The meeting was opened at 7:45pm.

Co-Chair Bob Jacobson welcomed everyone to the Sudbury Public Schools (K-8) FY06 Budget Hearing. He informed the public that this year's annual Town Meeting will begin on Monday, April 4, 2005. He quoted some figures from an article in the Jan. 13, 2005 edition of The Boston Globe "Feeling the Ax on Rising Taxes". Comparing the FY 2004 to the FY 2005 real estate bills, the Town of Boylston had a percentage change of 16.6%, while the Town of Sudbury had a 0.9% change.

Tracy Billig and Larry Rowe were introduced as the liaisons to the Sudbury Public Schools.

Superintendent, Dr. John Brackett was introduced as the presenter for the SPS budget presentation. He thanked the committee for giving him & the school committee the opportunity to make this presentation. He added that he really appreciates the process of having the monthly meetings with the liaisons. He feels it increases the level of communication between the committee and the school department.

The committee members were provided with a print-out copy (see attached) of the slide show to be presented before the meeting began. Dr. Brackett informed the audience & public that a copy of the slide show is available on the school's website: www.Sudbury.K12.ma.us.

It should be noted, there are a few errors on the slides:

Slide 19: The 2.8% increase should be for grades 1-5

Slides 28, 37, 44, and 48: The middle school world language teacher FTE should read 0.30

Clarification on some of the slides:

Slide 10: The other towns used for the comparisons were chosen, because their school systems are set-up most similar to the Town of Sudbury.

Slide 13: FY03 figures are being used, since they are the most recent ones available on the DOE website.

Slide 14: Class size guidelines: 20 for Kindergarten

22 for grades 1 & 2

24 for grades 3 through 8

Slide 18: 1971 was the school year that kindergarten was added for SPS. For future years, these are only preliminary figures. The project is not completed yet.

Slide 20: Home School Transportation - contracts will be going out to bid again this spring.

Slide 36: Lead Teacher - instead of adding an assistant principal, a stipend would be paid to one of the teachers to help with the daily administrative work.

When preparing the presentation, the school committee and Dr. Brackett tried looking at where the school once was and where they are now. They picked an exemplary year (2001-02) and compared to where they are now 2004-05. The school year 2001-02 was the best year for the Schools to look at, before all the drastic cuts started taking place.

As with all the cost centers utilities will have a big impact on their budget. In 2001-02, 2.8% of the budget was for utilities. In 2004-05, utilities account for 4.0% of the budget. The department is estimating it costs them over \$5,000 per day for heat & lights just to open the doors of the buildings.

To help keep costs down, the schools have participated in a joint effort with the parents to create a more paperless school system. Instead of spending hundreds of dollars on reams of paper, the schools now send out their newsletters via email. This is saving on both supply costs and staff time. At one of the schools, the PTO believes they are saving approximately \$6,000.

Bob Jacobson asked what the cost of living increase was for this year. John Brackett stated that they are in their third and final year of the contract. The increase was approximately 3%, but was not 3% straight across the board. This is the first school year that he can definitively state that the school system lost some candidates to other towns due to the low salaries being offered by Sudbury. He stated that the salary grid is fairly competitive at the beginning and end, but the middle sections are fairly lower compared to other Towns.

Dr. Brackett thanked the committee for giving him the time to make the presentation. The school department is aware of the financial issues facing all of the cost centers, and looks forward to working with the committee as partners in the future.

There being no questions from the committee or the audience, the committee took a five-minute break before continuing the meeting.

Item 3: Other Business:

Approve minutes from the Jan. 10, 2005 Budget Hearing with LSRHS:

Bill Kneeland asked that his name be added & Larry Rowe's removed as liaisons in the first paragraph under Item 2.

Marty Ragonese asked that Rosemary Colson's title be changed from Scheduling & Curriculum Coordinator to Director of Curriculum and Instruction.

VOTED: Motion to approve the January 10, 2005 minutes with the understanding the above mention changes are to be made. On vote, motion carries 9 in favor and 0 opposed.

There being no further business, the committee adjourned at 9:20pm.