

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday, December 3, 2008**

Present: Susan Iuliano, Chairperson; Jane Santinelli, Vice Chairperson;
Rich Robison, Jeff Beeler, Michele MacDonald

Also Present: Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent; Robert Milley, Assistant Superintendent; Mary Will, Director of Business and Finance; Deborah Dixson, Director of Special Education

1. Public Hearing on FY10 Budget

Note: This portion of the meeting was recorded for airing on the local cable access channel. Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. She gave an overview of the budget development process, noting the challenges of starting the process so early in the current fiscal year and the continually changing state aid and local revenue projections. She also outlined the procedure for the public hearing on the FY10 budget. Additionally, she encouraged the public to stay informed as the process progresses, noting that other budget forums would be scheduled and that the District website will be updated as new information is received.

(a) Presentation of FY10 Budget

Superintendent Brackett presented three budget scenarios, including a non-override budget (2.1% increase over the FY09 budget), the FinCom recommended budget (4.5% growth cap), and a SPS recommended needs budget. He provided examples of where cuts or additions might occur under the various scenarios—stressing that these were for example only—as well as illustrated impacts on classroom size. Compact disc copies of the presentation were provided; Dr. Brackett reiterated that the presentation and updates are also available on the District website.

(b) Public Comment

Art Gutch, Silver Hill Road, requested clarification of the impact of benefits on the budget, as well as an overview of the processes for negotiating and administering benefits. Members of the Committee and Superintendent Brackett outlined these impacts and processes.

Robert Stein, Thompson Drive, asked about the number of sabbaticals, bonuses, or payouts made by the District and about the number of teachers classified as full-time employees who actually work at an 80% level. Dr. Brackett confirmed that the SPS District has not awarded any sabbaticals, bonuses, or payouts and that the District has either full-time, or in some cases, part-time professional staff.

Mr. Stein recommended imploring the Selectmen to use a menu ballot to allow voters to choose to support an override assigned to an individual cost center, citing a credibility issue for SPS given some practices of L-S. Mr. Stein suggested that only such a menu ballot proposal would prevent the SPS from being penalized by the voters due to perceived problems at L.S. Jeff Beeler expressed concern with a view that the issues are so parochial and suggested that such a divisive view would be counter-productive. He expressed his view that that every person in Town was penalized by last year's failed override, not just the schools.

Beth Winograd, Phillips Road, commended the teachers at Nixon for their amazing job, but has observed an increase in the stress level. She opined that the Town and school districts take an "us" approach and that decisions should be made based on needs, not on impressions about what a particular cost center deserves.

Lisa Turkington, Dakin Road, read a prepared statement regarding a petition circulated by a recently formed organization, the Support Sudbury Political Action Committee. The petition requests that the Board of Selectmen present a budget that will at least maintain current town and school services for FY 2010. The petition is posted online and the group is soliciting signatures. In the first 29 hours following posting, 282 signatures were obtained. Several signers were in attendance and affirmed their support: Karen Darmer, Wagonwheel Road, Beth Winograd, Phillips Road, Christina Granahan, Shadow Oak Drive, Bethanne Hinkle, Cider Mill Road, Susan Smith Pokonoket Ave, Robin Cavanaugh, Dutton Road, Laurence Baize, Field Road.

Christina Granahan, Shadow Oak Drive, commented on the change in atmosphere she's observed, particularly in her kindergartener's classroom. She noted that everyone is working very hard and it is at times chaotic. She can't imagine the effect of additional cuts. She stated that public education must be accessible, but also acceptable. She is concerned that the District will lose high quality teachers if it continues to make cuts.

(c) Close of Public Hearing

Jeff Beeler reiterated that bullying represents a fundamental safety issue and that he views it as imperative that

the Wellness Coordinator position be restored to full-time, perhaps at the expense of another staff position, in order to appropriately reflect and carry out the District's commitment to its Anti-Bullying Program and supports. Dr. Brackett clarified the responsibilities of the Coordinator and the responsibilities for administering the program at the building level.

Rich Robison requested additional detail on the projected increase in the SPED budget over the original level. Debbie Dixson noted that the number of students and the severity of needs are the primary drivers and that increases in transportation and tuition costs come into play. She also clarified that the District SPED budget for a given fiscal year is set based on services that the CASE Collaborative provided two years prior to that fiscal year.

Susan Iuliano asked why offsets are decreasing. Mary Will cited reductions in Title I and Circuit Breaker funds, both of which may be additionally reduced.

Jeff Beeler asked Superintendent Brackett to comment on having grouped administrators and teachers under the heading of "professional staff" in the budget scenarios. Dr. Brackett responded that it would be a disservice to prematurely specify cuts from particular groups. It was also noted that the District uses minimal administrative support and that each administrative position has a significant impact on the functioning of the District.

Jane Santinelli asked if the other cost centers will prepare 8% reduction budgets and asked if the 5% local reduction represents the high or low end of the range. Susan Iuliano reported that L-S is not making adjustments for local receipts, but is assuming a 5% reduction in Chapter 70 funds. She also noted that the FinCom likely will make adjustments in order to more accurately define the magnitude of an override, but that the FinCom does not plan to request adjustments continuously.

Susan Iuliano asked Members to consider if the Committee should take its usual approach of voting on its recommended needs budget or if another approach should be considered. After some discussion, the Committee concurred with voting on its recommended needs budget and will continue to commit to the public education component of the budget process.

2. School Committee Report

Discussion of Budgeting Timeline

Susan Iuliano reported that the Board of Selectmen is working with Lincoln's Board to consider moving the joint town elections back (later) by one month, with a subsequent move of Town Meeting by one month. The plan is expected to be developed in time to vote in 2010 for implementation in 2011.

3. Open Forum

No comments.

4. Superintendent's Report

(a) Potential Use of Autism Grant Funding

Superintendent Brackett informed the Committee that he recently talked with a representative of the Rosenberg Charitable Trust. The District has been the recipient of donations from this Trust for the past two years and is slated to receive a donation this year as well. Funds are to be used to serve those Sudbury students on the autism spectrum. His discussion with the Trust representative focused on possibilities for utilizing the funds. A recognized need is access to opportunities for recreational and social interaction. Details of how the program would be administered were not discussed. Dr. Brackett asked the Committee for a consensus that such an initiative is in keeping with its vision for donations and the area of use. The Committee agreed to the value of such programming. A steering committee will be established to guide the program development. It will be necessary to contract for a director/coordinator. Dr. Brackett emphasized that all costs for the program, including salary for a coordinator, will be covered by the donated funds, not SPS operating funds.

SPED Director Debbie Dixson introduced Leo Rotman, Stock Farm Road, who was instrumental in bringing a Special Olympics program to Sudbury. Mr. Rotman mentioned some resources that might prove useful to the Committee.

(b) Bill Schedule

A bill schedule was presented.

(c) Donation

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Jane Santinelli, to accept a donation, with thanks, of \$50.00 from Leuders Environmental, Inc., received November 18, 2008. This is an annual donation that the District is free to use as it deems appropriate. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

(d) **Out of State Field Trip**

VOTED: On a motion by Jane Santinelli, seconded by Jeff Beeler, to approve an out-of-state (RI) field trip for all Haynes Grade 3 students to Roger Williams Park Zoo. The vote was 5-0 in favor. Dr. Brackett will follow up regarding the cost per student and the extent, if any, of financial support provided by the Haynes Organization of Parents.

5. Minutes–Regular Session, November 12, 2008

VOTED: On a motion by Jane Santinelli, seconded by Jeff Beeler, to approve the minutes of the November 12, 2008 Regular Session, as amended. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

6. Communications

As described in the Communications Packet and additionally by an email received by Dr. Brackett with budget-related comments. These comments will be shared with the Board of Selectmen.

7. Members’ Forum

Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley reported on a highly productive professional development day that took place on December 1. Included in the offerings was a half-day workshop focused on the Colonial Sudbury program. Teachers Liz Kerrigan and Florence Aldrich-Bennett led this workshop, with Sudbury Historical Commission member Lee Swanson participating as well.

Rich Robison reported that the Budget Review Task Force (BRTF) has almost completed its report of recommendations for the Town to consider as cost-savings measures. Among the features Rich noted were the following: consolidation of SPS and L-S districts, regionalization with Wayland or several other communities, collective bargaining considerations, school choice, and fee-based all-day kindergarten.

Jane Santinelli reported on a recent discussion she had with a member of the Wayland School Committee, which is also considering consolidations as a means to cost savings.

John Brackett reported that no additional progress has been made on the FY10 calendar.

Susan Iuliano will be communicating with the Committee to schedule a joint meeting in January with the Board of Selectmen to discuss collective bargaining. Additionally, she is communicating with the League of Women Voters regarding scheduling conflicts on March 11 with the League’s Candidate’s Night and a Regular Session of the School Committee.

8. Executive Session

None.

9. Adjourn

VOTED: On a motion by Jane Santinelli, seconded by Susan Iuliano, to adjourn the Regular Session. The time was 11:05 p.m. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

Yes Susan Iuliano
Yes Jane Santinelli
Yes Rich Robison
Yes Jeff Beeler
Yes Michele MacDonald

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary