

**Sudbury Public Schools  
Sudbury, Massachusetts  
School Committee Regular Meeting  
Wednesday December 1, 2010**

**Present:** Susan Iuliano, Chairperson; Jeff Beeler, Vice Chairman;  
Dr. Rich Robison, Michele MacDonald, Lisa Gutch

**Also Present:** Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent; Robert Milley, Assistant Superintendent; Mary Will, Director of Business and Finance; Dr. Robert Mealey, SEA

**Open Session**

Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

Superintendent Brackett announced the death in Afghanistan of First Lieutenant Scott Milley, whose family lives in Sudbury. Scott graduated from LS in 2005 and also attended Curtis and Noyes. His mother, Janice, is a teaching assistant at Curtis. Dr. Brackett asked for a moment of reflection for Scott Milley and for his family, father Stephen, mother Janice, and siblings Stephen and Ashley.

**1. FY12 Enrollment Projections**

Superintendent Brackett briefly outlined the enrollment projection process. The District uses a modified cohort survival method over a five-year history of grade movement. This is the first year where the impact of redistricting must be considered. Dr. Brackett explained that kindergarten is the most uncertain grade to project. Since the advent of full-day kindergarten (FDK), a greater number of children have been entering the SPS system in kindergarten, evidenced by the diminished gap in enrollments between Grades K and 1. Over the nine grades, enrollment is projected to decrease 2.2% (69 students), comparable to the 2.1% decrease experienced this year. Most of this decrease is at the early elementary level; in fact, Curtis enrollment is growing.

Staffing projections have not been made yet. The budget process will begin with flat staffing, except that staff added with federal education job funds will not be included in the Roll-up Budget. The Administration will continue to monitor economic and real estate trends.

Superintendent Brackett highlighted some interesting trends in kindergarten growth compared with the birth rate. Historically, the growth rate ran about 25-30% above the birth rate. With FDK, the growth rate is upwards of 40% above the birth rate. The birth rate attributable to Sudbury is projected to continue to decline.

Dr. Brackett suggested that the Committee revisit the distribution of half- and full-day classrooms, given that enrollment currently stands at 92% for FDK.

Although the (pre-K)–8 enrollment projections show a continual decline through 2014, Superintendent Brackett does not foresee a school closure.

The gap trends through 2014 indicate that the redistricting plan was effective in meeting the objective of decreasing the enrollment differences between the four elementary schools.

**2. FY12 Budget Projections**

Superintendent Brackett presented data showing areas of current expenditures. He emphasized that over 85% of the entire budget is expended on “in the schools” education. The remainder of the budget goes toward the Central Office (4%), Transportation (2%), and Utilities (9%).

Dr. Brackett presented an overview of the Roll-up Budget. Maintaining existing personnel and programs would require a 4% increase in the total budget, including a 7% increase in benefits. He noted that the positions added this year as a result of receiving last-minute Jobs bill funds are not included in the FTE count. Additionally, he summarized some of the increases: salaries by 2.8% after offsets, expenses by 3%, SPED by 8.65%. Utilities were not increased; the FY11 budgeted expenses are sufficient to cover the FY12 projected expenses.

One of the largest Special Education expenses is that for out-of-district students. Superintendent Brackett emphasized that this is still the most cost-effective way to educate particular students with particular needs. He noted that there is some fluidity in the numbers, including those for students moving on to high school. Projected enrollment changes might decrease out-of-district costs by as much as \$300K for next year, which would have a significant impact on the total budget increase. The District also must further assess costs of students entering the District. As part of monitoring SPED enrollment trends, the District continues to enhance its communication with LS and has kept the high school apprised of students in the pipeline.

Superintendent Brackett confirmed for Rich Robison that SPS maintains an agreement with LS to continue its responsibility for some students after they enter LS. The arrangement, which better positions LS to handle the influx of students, is based on chronological age, rather than the year of entry to Grade 9.

Superintendent Brackett also confirmed for Dr. Robison that the IDEA maintenance of effort requirement is not affected if SPED expenditures drop because it would be tied to a reduction in enrollment.

Superintendent Brackett presented three scenarios of the Roll-up Budget differing by the assumptions about state and local aid. A deficit of approximately \$700K would result if state and local aid remained flat, with the only change in revenue resulting from Proposition 2 1/2.

Other considerations include trends in Chapter 70 funds. In FY10, Chapter 70 funds dropped by 2%, but receipt of stimulus money resulted in overall growth. In FY11, Chapter 70 funds dropped over 6%, but this was made up in large part by Jobs funds and to a lesser degree, by stimulus money. Superintendent Brackett suggested that an FY08 number for Chapter 70 funds would be optimistic. A less optimistic scenario with cuts of 10% in state and local aid would lead to a deficit of just over \$900K. This includes an assumption of a flat 40% reimbursement rate for Circuit Breaker, which is optimistic. Finally, assuming flat revenues, reduced SPED expenses, and no drops in local aid, the deficit would be just under \$370K.

Superintendent Brackett emphasized that critical needs are not included in the Roll-up Budget. Among the needs not addressed are growing class sizes, a Curtis grade administrator, a Haynes assistant principal, elementary math coaches, a shared District/Town facilities director, an ELA curriculum coordinator, and a part-time social studies curriculum coordinator.

In addition to these needs, the District is working with the Town to develop a mechanism by which benefits funds come to SPS when cost-savings occur because of changes in particular positions, such as reductions in personnel. At present for example, SPS is unable to fully use such benefits cost-savings to offset unemployment costs, which were budgeted at \$37K and currently exceed \$100K.

With regard to transportation costs, Mary Will reported that the District will save on METCO transportation by joining with Wayland and Lincoln in obtaining bids for a new contract. Further, Lincoln may join with LS and SPS in seeking bids for regular in-district transportation. She also stated that a pre-vote at Town Meeting would be necessary to extend

the transportation contract for two more years, if the District were to pursue that option, but will likely seek new bids.

### **3. Facility Fees**

The District continues to reassess its building-use fee structure, having implemented some changes last year. Mary Will stated that all groups using the Curtis auditorium are assessed a fee to do so. A sound and light person is also required in order to protect the equipment. The auditorium is a very high-use area and is in need of some refurbishing and upgrading. Park and Rec also makes use of the grounds and occasionally the building; the District is in the process of negotiating with the Town for a fee that will be passed on to the third-party providers. The new fee schedule is anticipated to be in place by summer.

The two highest users of the five school buildings are Sudbury Youth Basketball and SED. Basketball enrolls approximately 850 participants. The SED enrollment is 579. Basketball runs every night from the beginning of November through March and includes overtime pay for custodians. The total number of hours in FY10 was 1,787 over all buildings, with over \$50K in custodial fees.

SED use totals four hours per day over 180 days and 10 hours over 12 days of vacation. This totals 840 hours per/building, or 3,750 hours for all buildings. Custodial costs are only incurred for holiday and vacation days. The bulk of the costs relate to utilities, rather than wear and tear.

Ms. Will obtained a very low response rate to a query of other districts concerning building-use fees. Moreover, many districts run their own after-school programs. She is in the process of getting numbers from both Park and Rec and LS. She asked the Committee to consider what might be fair, suggesting either a fee per student or a flat fee for the season.

Rich Robison referred to Bostnet, a network of out-of-school programs, noting that there seems to be a trend away from schools running their own programs. Jeff Beeler noted a concern about parity in setting a single fee for basketball and SED, given the differences in their building use.

The Committee will continue to examine possible fee structures.

### **4. Food Service Operations**

The District engaged Edvocate, a consulting firm, to assess its food service operations and the possibility of outsourcing. Mary Will provided an overview of the report and suggested returning to this in January with the consultant present.

Last April, Edvocate met with staff, food service employees, and students. The report, which was received in June, compares Sudbury data to Edvocate's large, nationwide database. The Sudbury program compares favorably in terms of its caring staff, safety and sanitary conditions, and cost-savings in food and labor. Sudbury is weaker in that the District needs to improve certain business functions and that the program does not cover the cost of benefits. Additionally, labor costs run 30% higher than the national standard; however, Ms. Will emphasized the need to review regional data.

Ms. Will reviewed benefit data and reported that health and Medicare benefits run just over \$200K for the 15 food service employees. Average salaries range from \$20K for managers to 14K for assistants for a 30 hour weekly schedule.

The goal of the assessment was to obtain help with the business model and improving both the menu and prices. Ms. Will commented that benefits will never be covered with a self-operated program.

When current revenues are used in an outsourcing model, the profit is \$38K with a \$200K savings in benefits; however, the Town would have to agree that the \$200K savings in benefits would come back to the District.

Jeff Beeler and Susan Iuliano will meet with the consultant next week, in anticipation of the presentation by Edvocate to the Committee in January.

Rich Robison noted that the savings comes in the form of replacing skilled, caring workers with lower wage earners. It was noted that Newton recently considered a move to contracted services and was met with significant negotiation challenges and political outcry.

To Jeff Beeler's inquiry about not renewing contracts, SEA President Bob Mealey confirmed that food service employees, like teachers, work under their old contract until a new one is in place. Mr. Beeler wishes to clarify these issues with labor counsel.

Superintendent Brackett asked the Committee to continue to think about the objective for the food service program, particularly with respect to its covering all its costs. He noted a need to make changes in the way the District operates, including at the management level.

## 5. G4

Susan Iuliano distributed a summary of next steps prepared by the G4, which includes Lincoln, Sudbury, LS, and Wayland and has been examining ways of sharing costs or services. The G4 identified 14 areas where functional groups met to share information and examine ways to cut costs or improve services. Ms. Iuliano asked the Committee to consider what types of impediments exist to sharing services and programs, as well as areas it considers to have the most potential.

Superintendent Brackett emphasized the value in information-sharing that resulted from convening the G4. The value is borne out in having built bridges to provide complementary supports, notably in ELL. Additional sharing has occurred with professional development.

The efforts of the G4 did not identify significant cost-savings. The consulting firm S<sup>3</sup> additionally examined the payroll structure. Because each district is so small, consolidation would result in little payroll savings. The consultants noted that some processes and procedures could be streamlined with further automation

In general, the major barriers to sharing functions or operations are differences in governance and organizational structure. Such elements as differing annual school calendars and daily schedules, as well as travel distances, preclude more extensive sharing in some instances.

Ms. Iuliano stated that to move forward, participating districts must consider their willingness to commit resources. Superintendent Brackett stated that at the level of the administration, there is a high level of interest, but a reluctance to speak on behalf of the individual School Committees.

Rich Robison provided his overview of areas of cooperation, noting particular value in establishing communities of practice. He commented on the lack of structure that allows sharing across municipal boundaries and the District's participation in existing, larger collaboratives, such as those that support SPED.

Transportation was noted as an area where it does make sense to consolidate. Superintendent Brackett commented on the differing practices surrounding HR, which have resulted in some sharing of expertise. If consolidation in this area occurred, he noted that Sudbury would lose some of its current level of service and would not realize a cost-savings; whereas, LS would both save money and enhance service and Lincoln would experience significantly increased costs for some enhanced service. Moreover, Dr. Brackett noted that the individual systems currently work for each district.

Susan Iuliano asked the Committee to consider areas of focus. The professional development calendar was deemed a reasonable area to align. Like HR, technology poses a more challenging area to explore, but is recognized as an area that could benefit from the economy of scale.

Jeff Beeler supports further exploration if study costs do not outweigh projected savings. Rich Robison commented that the upcoming changes in leadership in three of the four districts might leave insufficient time to make changes.

The Committee will continue to assess areas of potential resource sharing.

**6. School Committee Report**

None.

**7. Open Forum**

No Comments.

**8. Superintendent's Report**

(a) Donations

None.

(b) Recognitions

None.

(c) Bill schedule

A Bill Schedule was presented.

(d) Personnel Actions

As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

**9. Minutes—November 17, 2010 Regular Session**

**VOTED:** On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Rich Robison to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2010 Regular Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

**10. Communications**

As outlined in the Communications Packet.

**11. Members' Forum**

Bob Mealey announced that the annual holiday party is scheduled for December 10 at Lavender, starting at 3:30.

Bob Milley distributed a summary of the November 29 professional development activities.

John Brackett clarified that the Committee's December 15 Regular Session will be held at Nixon.

**12. Adjourn**

**VOTED:** On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Michele MacDonald to adjourn the Regular Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor. The time was 10:30 p.m.

Yes Susan Iuliano  
Yes Jeff Beeler  
Yes Rich Robison  
Yes Michele MacDonald  
Yes Lisa Gutch

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary