

**Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday January 4, 2012
Fairbank Senior Center**

Present: Jeff Beeler, Chairman; Susan Iuliano, Vice Chairperson
Dr. Rich Robison, Lisa Gutch, Ellen Winer Joachim

Also Present: Dr. Anne Wilson, Superintendent; Dr. Judy Malone Neville, Assistant Superintendent;
Mary Will, Business and Finance Director; Robert Mealey, SEA

Open Session

Jeff Beeler called the Open Session to order at 7:32 p.m. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

1. FY13 Enrollment Projection and

2. Adopt FY13 Preliminary Budget

Superintendent Anne Wilson presented an update of enrollment figures for FY13. Current kindergarten registrations total 168, with 146 and 22 students registered for full- and half-day programs respectively. This breakdown is similar to that for registrations at this point in the year for FY12. Dr. Wilson commented that a decision on the location of the half-day classrooms will be made in the spring. At this time, seventeen families who received enrollment packets have confirmed that their children will not attend kindergarten in FY13.

A net decrease of 80 students in Grades 1–5 is projected for FY13; enrollment at the middle school is projected to remain constant with FY12. Dr. Wilson reported anticipating a decreased staffing need of 6.5 FTE based on enrollment projections. Class sizes are expected to remain either constant or slightly increased over FY12, but largely remain within guidelines.

Dr. Wilson presented updated budget information. The shortfall, based on the particular assumptions and projections highlighted, had been adjusted to \$143,000, down from just under \$390,000 presented at the December 21, 2011 Regular Session. This reduction in shortfall would be based on staff reduction of 6.5 FTE. Included in the budget are 2.0 FTE math coaches/specialists (\$111,718) and 2.0 FTE in general K–8 staffing (\$111,718), identified as essential to the District’s mission of ‘Improving on Excellence’.

Director of Business and Finance Mary Will added that efficiencies realized in transportation costs, totaling approximately \$85,000, also contributed to reducing the projected shortfall. Ms. Will confirmed that the budget presented does not reflect firm retirement numbers, COLA, SPED expenses or savings, which will be updated in February, or firm unemployment figures. Additionally, at the request of the Finance Committee, the salary line reflects only projected increases related to step changes and no increases related to COLA.

Superintendent Wilson highlighted the potential impact to Improving on Excellence resulting from the loss of federal stimulus funds, which totaled over \$560,000 last year. She illustrated the interplay between students, the instructional practices used by teachers, and curriculum content. Dr. Wilson emphasized the need to continue with initiatives started with stimulus funding, including professional and curriculum development, technology, and data analysis and assessment. The addition of the 2.0 math coaches/specialists FTE and 2.0 general K–8

staffing FTE in the Roll-Up budget is designed to enhance those initiatives and continue the work begun, in part, with stimulus funds.

The Committee must submit a voted budget to the Town by January 13. Susan Iuliano indicated that historically, the budget voted and submitted at this time bears little resemblance to the budget presented at Town Meeting. Moreover, she indicated that, at this time, the approved budget is based on expenses only, rather than expenses and revenue. The District also must submit a non-override budget, which will reflect the shortfall between the approved budget and projected revenue at this time. Finally, Ms. Iuliano emphasized that it is premature to develop a budget balancing plan and thus the budget reduction will be presented generally, not based on specific targeted reductions, in the non-override budget.

The Committee discussed the desire to continue with initiatives started with stimulus funding. Additionally, some Members expressed concern with staff reductions that might compromise options for addressing the large incoming Grade 8 class, as well as needs that might arise in the other grades. Some concern was expressed in voting a budget with a deficit that might be construed as a 'ceiling'.

Jeff Beeler noted that the Committee is required to vote a budget at this time when many variables remain in flux. He also noted the Finance Committee's request that the budget be presented without any placeholder number for COLAs, which is different from past practice. He suggested highlighting this unknown variable in the submission. On behalf of the SEA, Bob Mealey expressed his concern that if the deficit number does not include COLA salary increases prior to negotiations, teachers will be blamed when negotiations yield the true cost, which could add in the range of \$500,000 to the deficit.

Superintendent Wilson commented that computer-generated scheduling options will be used to assess changes at the middle school. This will permit more efficient consideration of a broader number of options. Dr. Wilson remarked that she does not believe such scheduling changes will necessitate a large change in FTE's; however, she appreciated the concern expressed at the prospect of leaving the District short with a 6.5 FTE reduction. The Committee concurred to reduce the FTE reduction from 6.5 to 4.5 FTE, with related expense line and deficit adjustments.

VOTED: On a motion by Rich Robison, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the roll-up budget as presented, with the adjustments discussed. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

Susan Iuliano circulated the budget hearing schedule established by the Finance Committee at its December 19, 2011 meeting. The School Committee will present its level staff or roll-up budget on Thursday, February 9 and its non-override budget on Monday, February 13.

Ms. Iuliano reported that she, Lisa Gutch, Mary Will, and Anne Wilson met recently with the Finance Committee liaisons to the School Committee. The liaisons then reported back to the Finance Committee. In Ms. Iuliano's view, the School Committee's message was well conveyed by the liaisons; however, questions and misinformation surrounding compensation for Central Office administrators were put forth by Finance Committee Member, Bob Stein. Mr. Stein called recent salary increases for the administrators, including the Superintendent, "massive" and questioned the justifications for the increases. Ms. Iuliano offered information that salary increases for administrators arose as a result of market corrections and brought salaries in line with other districts. Ms. Iuliano also clarified that the Superintendent's total compensation is less than that of former Superintendent Brackett. She noted that Finance Committee Chairman, Jim Rao, terminated the line of questioning for the meeting. Finance Committee members suggested questions may be submitted to the District for clarification as a follow-up to the meeting. Lisa Gutch confirmed Ms. Iuliano's meeting summary and remarked that she found the manner in which the questions concerning compensation were

asked to be disturbing. Ms. Iuliano also reported that similar misinformation concerning the Superintendent salaries recently appeared in anonymous blog posts, primarily on the *Town Crier*.

Jeff Beeler indicated that he was troubled that any member of a Town Committee would inject misinformation into what was supposed to be an objective and dispassionate discussion about school finance. While noting that the Committee could not address all sources of misinformation, especially those that are anonymous, noting that such sources are inherently unreliable, a member of the Finance Committee elevating such information at a level where it could potentially impact policy-making poses serious concerns. Given that the School Committee takes quite seriously its obligation to present factual information about SPS operations, Mr. Beeler stated that it was proper for the Committee to respond.

He noted that the School Committee does not usually discuss individual compensation publically, but that under the circumstances, and given that such information is publically available, some discussion, with apologies to the specific employees involved, was warranted.

First, Mr. Beeler noted that the suggestion that Dr. Wilson is paid more than Dr. Brackett is simply false. Using a PowerPoint slide it was noted that the \$188,277 in contractual compensation provided during the last year of Dr. Brackett's employment is greater than the \$169,800 in compensation provided in Dr. Wilson's contract. The PowerPoint slide set forth 3 elements of Dr. Brackett's compensation: salary (\$161,277), annuity (\$21,000) and tuition reimbursement (\$6,000). It was noted that while Dr. Brackett likely did not take advantage of the tuition reimbursement, at a minimum his compensation was \$12,477 more than Dr. Wilson's. It was noted that Dr. Wilson's compensation was in line with the going rate when she was hired and that the hiring process illustrated to the Committee that it was quite fortunate to have had the services of Dr. Brackett for what he was being paid. It was also explained that historically the School Committee has allowed Superintendents to direct a portion of their compensation into an annuity. Dr. Brackett decided to do so; Dr. Wilson decided not to do so. The data presented also noted that Dr. Wilson's compensation, at \$169,800, was lower than that of the Superintendents of Concord, Lincoln, Wayland, Wellesley, and Weston (which ranged from \$180,073–\$200,000).

As it relates to other Central Office administrators, Mr. Beeler noted that the Superintendent – not the School Committee – sets those salaries. Nevertheless, he noted that the Committee was, and is, kept advised of such information. He noted that in the judgment of Dr. Brackett, and the Committee, the market adjustments at issue were warranted, appropriate and necessary to ensure the continued proper management of the SPS District that serves more than 3,000 children. It was further noted that at the time the market adjustments were made, there was not only a concern about fairness in compensation, but a need to ensure the retention of valued employees who would provide continuity and stability to a District that was undergoing profound leadership change at the highest administrative levels. Additional comparative data was presented that placed the other Central Office administrators' compensation in the mid-range of the Districts noted above.

Mr. Beeler closed his comments by noting that it was unfortunate that this issue needed to be addressed in this manner. He noted his intention to address this with both the Chairman of the Finance Committee and the Town Moderator, who is the elected official who appoints the members of the Finance Committee.

4. Open Forum

Sonya Stevens, Dutton Road, is the parent of both a kindergartner and an incoming eighth-grader. She stated her agreement with Lisa Gutch, who expressed concern about the middle

school incoming Grade 8 class size and scheduling, remarking on the vulnerability of children in that age group.

3. School Committee Report

(a) Communications/Public Relations

No updates.

(b) Transportation Warrant Article

At its December 7, 2011 meeting, Susan Iuliano distributed outlines of four related bills pending at this time. She reported that there has been no movement on any of these bills or the Sharon home-rule petition seeking an exemption from the transportation requirements and recommended against the Committee bringing the home-rule petition to Town Meeting. Legislators and staff have advised the Committee that the legislature is unlikely to support a home-rule exception for one town on a matter that has state-wide implications, especially with pending efforts to change the state-wide requirements. She noted that the Committee could decide to work on one of the state-wide measures, but that a decision about these efforts does not have to be made at this time.

Rich Robison offered an additional strategy where another organization could pull together a coalition of suburban towns to work on an initiative. He also suggested approaching MASC to gauge interest, although he noted the organization's tendency to consider transportation an urban and rural issue.

VOTED: On a motion by Susan Iuliano, seconded by Ellen Joachim, not to prepare a transportation home-rule petition warrant article for Town Meeting 2012. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

4. Open Forum

No comments.

5. Superintendent's Report

(a) Recognitions

Superintendent Wilson praised all of the District's parent volunteers for their much-appreciated contributions. Acknowledging that there are too many instances of volunteerism to mention, Dr. Wilson illustrated the breadth of parent contributions by citing contributions through the parent organizations, with the Grade 4 Bridges program, within music classrooms, the Sudbury Food Pantry, and the Special Education Advisory Council.

(b) Bill Schedule

A Bill Schedule was presented.

(c) Personnel Actions

As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

6. Minutes

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Ellen Joachim, to approve the minutes of the December 21, 2011 Regular Session as amended. The vote was 4–0 in favor. Susan Iuliano abstained.

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Susan Iuliano, to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2010 Executive Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor. Ellen Joachim abstained.

VOTED: On a motion by Susan Iuliano, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2010 Executive Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor. Ellen Joachim abstained.

VOTED: On a motion by Susan Iuliano, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the minutes of the January 31, 2011 Special Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor. Ellen Joachim abstained.

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Susan Iuliano, to approve the minutes of the February 23, 2011 Special Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor. Ellen Joachim abstained.

VOTED: On a motion by Susan Iuliano, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the minutes of the March 3, 2011 Special Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor. Ellen Joachim abstained.

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Susan Iuliano, to approve the minutes of the March 7, 2011 Special Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor. Ellen Joachim abstained.

VOTED: On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Rich Robison, to approve the minutes of the March 8, 2011 Special Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor. Ellen Joachim abstained.

VOTED: On a motion by Susan Iuliano, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to approve the minutes of the March 21, 2011 Special Session. The vote was 4–0 in favor. Ellen Joachim abstained.

7. Members' Forum

Jeff Beeler acknowledged receipt of a letter from Dr. Mealey on behalf of the SEA. The purpose of the letter was to inform the Committee that the SEA is interested in beginning contract negotiations.

Mr. Beeler also announced that he does not intend to seek reelection to the School Committee.

Susan Iuliano announced that she does not intend to seek reelection to the School Committee. She encouraged individuals interested in serving to contact the Committee to learn more.

Judy Malone Neville welcomed Pam Ellavsky, who is serving as an interim administrative assistant in the Assistant Superintendent's office. She also announced that January 13 is a professional development day.

Bob Mealey remarked that he looks forward to entering into negotiations. In his view, they permit a focus beyond salary and benefits; they provide an opportunity to reflect on and appreciate why teachers "do what they do". Dr. Mealey also expressed appreciation for the meal prepared for his family in December during his recovery.

Sheila Cusolito requested a copy of Chairman Jeff Beeler's statement regarding salaries in order to incorporate it into the Regular Session record.

Rich Robison reported that the State is working on an accountability bill for all Collaboratives. Features include an oversight commission, enhanced audit requirements, and restructuring for those Collaboratives that have both public and non-profit arms under a single board of directors. Dr. Robison indicated that the quality of programming should not suffer, but the breadth of programming might be at risk.

8. Adjourn

VOTED: On a motion by Susan Iuliano, seconded by Lisa Gutch, to adjourn to 5–0 in favor. The time was 9:30 p.m.

Yes	Jeff Beeler
Yes	Susan Iuliano
Yes	Rich Robison
Yes	Lisa Gutch
Yes	Ellen Winer Joachim

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary