

Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday, January 9, 2002

Present: Rich Robison, Chairperson, Karen Krone, Vice Chairperson

Members: Bill Braun, Kathy Precourt, Jane Santinelli

Also Present: William J. Hurley, Superintendent, Patti Grenier, Assistant Superintendent,
Paul Funk, Director of Business & Finance, Debbie Dixon, SPED
Administrator, Jean Foster, SEA

Rich Robison called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

Open Forum I

Alicia Sisk, Basswood Avenue, Peter Noyes Advisory Council, requested a brief explanation of the current financial situation. Rich Robison explained that the Town is facing a \$4.8M deficit spread across all departments including the high school, the k-8 system and town departments.

Robin Gunderson, Fox Run, applauded the efforts of the School Committee and the Administration for the past several years to reduce class sizes.

II. Superintendent's Report

A. Recognition

The Superintendent recognized 5th grade teachers and students at the Loring School for their project, United We Stand. 5th graders put together fabric squares and modeled the activity for other students throughout the school. The fabric squares were sent to people in communities of New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC affected by the September 11th tragedy.

The Superintendent recognized Noyes teachers Roz Hill and Becky Drake-Hedin for hosting a monthly study group on technology. Technology Specialists Paula Johnson and Donna Criswell also work with them.

The Superintendent recognized Noyes Teachers Beth Brown and Roz Hill for conducting a book workshop - Alternatives in the Classroom, which addresses ADD and ADHD. Teachers share the reading at the workshop and also at staff meetings.

The Superintendent recognized the Administrative Staff for their work on identifying possible reductions in the budget due to the current financial situation.

The Superintendent recognized the staff at Curtis for the positive turnaround over the past three years in the demonstrated level of energy and enthusiasm for learning.

I. School Committee Report

A. Town Budget Update - Subcommittee Report

Kathy Precourt gave a brief overview of the financial situation. The Finance Committee requested a budget with only contractual obligations included but with no increase in personnel-a level effort budget. This, along with proposed budgets of other Town departments, including the high school, compared with available revenue, leaves the entire Town with a deficit of \$4.9M. This represents about a 7% increase across the board. The problem is in the amount of revenue available to the Town, which is impacted by the following factors: State Aid will be reduced for FY '03, receipts from building permits have decreased, excise tax receipts have decreased, and there is less Free Cash available.

II. Superintendent's Report

B. FY '03 Budget Scenarios

The Superintendent explained that the School Committee voted a Budget of \$2,125,491 which represented an increase of 10.1%.

The drivers for this increase are

- salary increases (4.56%)
- increases in special education (4.3%)*
- other expenses (1.2%)

*This year's special education expenses are \$700,000 more than budgeted. This amount must be put into next year's budget, in addition to a \$200,000 increase.

The Superintendent reviewed the Town budget including the Town, K-8 system, and L-S in terms of requested funds and available funds, resulting in a town-wide deficit of \$4.8M. The K-8 system shortfall is \$2.6M, which requires us to reduce the budget by this amount to submit to the Finance Committee. The following scenarios are possible:

If there is a 3.5% override of \$2.7M town-wide, a \$1.1M reduction in the K-8 budget would be necessary.

If there is a 5% override of \$3.6M town-wide, a \$603,818 reduction in the K-8 budget would be necessary.

If any override fails, a \$2.6M reduction in the K-8 budget would be necessary.

Discussion points among the Committee members included the need to maintain class sizes, what an appropriate override amount would be, the need to maintain programs that we have worked so hard to get back in recent years. Any override less than the full amount of the deficit would result in budget reductions.

Open Forum II

Katy Howd, Revolutionary Road, PTO Loring, stated that the override amount doesn't matter, whether

it's \$3.5M or \$4.9M. Can we poll parents through the schools to give them these options and ask for opinions? Bill Braun explained that the School Committee cannot do that. Possibly the PTO's or neighborhood groups, etc. could do it independently, not through the schools. Typically, a political action committee is formed to do fundraising, outside of the school system.

Beth Sackstein, Fox Run, Noyes Advisory Council, stated the need to find a way to educate the public about this issue. A public hearing with the Finance Committee will be held on January 29.

Alicia Sisk, Noyes School, asked if the school newsletter could be used? The Superintendent explained that basic information on the time and place of a vote is ok. When is the deadline? 1st week of February. She requested clarification on the role of curriculum specialists. She questioned the Special Education increase of \$700,000, where did it come from? Debbie Dixson explained that an influx of new students required out of district placements and we continue to see increasing enrollment in the pre-school of children with significant needs.

Brian Flood, Red Horse Path, asked of the reductions in revenues, which has had the greatest impact? Kathy Precourt explained that Free Cash is down \$800,000, local receipts are down \$355,000, state aid is down \$40,000, and miscellaneous is down \$600,000.

Tad Mayer, Darvell Drive, Nixon PTO, asked if there is any negotiation about how much of the shortfall is absorbed by the K-8 system? Rich Robison explained that decisions are based on discussions with all Town departments. This is a town issue where everyone needs to work together.

Alexa Crowe, Old Sudbury Road, asked if it was possible to go to the teachers and ask for no salary increases? Bill Braun explained the difficulty around hiring and maintaining qualified teachers and that the School Committee would try to live up to contractual negotiations.

Roselle Levy, Marlboro Road, urged the School Committee to pursue a course of action to maintain as much of the budget as possible.

Jean Foster reported an error in the Town Crier article that stated the teacher salary increase was 4.56%, when in reality the contractual increase is 3%. Bill Braun and Bill Hurley explained that 4.56% is the total salary percentage of increase for all employees and that other teachers' step increases and semi increments reflect more than the 3% base salary negotiated.

I. School Committee Report

B. 2002-2003 School Calendar

The calendar has been revised by removing a Professional Development Day in April that was included in error. A typo was noted to remove June 27 in the note of 5 reserve snow days. The proposed calendar has a start day for students of September 3.

VOTED: On a motion by Kathy Precourt, seconded by Jane Santinelli, to accept the School Calendar for 2002-2003 as presented. The vote was 4 in favor, 1 abstention.

C. Bill Schedule

A bill schedule was presented.

II. Superintendent's Report

C. Vote on Safety Plan

This item will be addressed at a future meeting.

D. Update on Strategic Plan

This item will be addressed at a future meeting.

E. Vote on Physical Restraint Policy

The Superintendent reported that the policy has been reviewed by Counsel.

VOTED: On a motion by Karen Krone, seconded by Bill Braun, to accept the Physical Restraint Policy as presented. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

III. Communications

As outlined in the Communications Packet.

IV. Minutes

VOTED: On a motion by Karen Krone, seconded by Kathy Precourt, to accept the minutes of the December 19, 2001 Regular Session with the following change: Page 2 Review of Physical Restraint Policy and Procedure, change "sample" to "draft"; and the minutes of the December 19, 2001 Executive Session as presented. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

V. Personnel Action

As outlined in the Personnel Packet.

Member's Forum

Jean Foster stated that teachers, particularly new hires, are nervous about the budget. The Superintendent will send out an e-mail explaining the situation.

Patti Grenier thanked Karen for the holiday luncheon. She also reported that the District received a grant for transitional planning for full-day kindergarten which she had submitted.

Kathy Precourt received a call about naming a playing field at Curtis for Nancy Lewis, who coached girls softball for many years. Kathy will inform the person making the request to write a letter to the School Committee.

Karen Krone commented on the positive response of parents in the community regarding the budget issue. She will write a newsletter article which will include the 2002-2003 school start date and information on the meeting with the Finance Committee on January 29. She also stated the Committee should consider putting the override question on the ballot in March.

Rich Robison distributed A Parent's Guide to Special Education.

Bill Hurley invited Committee members to attend the January 30 Professional Development Training Day for Administrative Staff on leadership and school culture. Members should call Jan Seftor if they

are planning to attend.

Jane Santinelli thanked everyone for their efforts.

Debbie Dixon stated the administrators would welcome the School Committee members on their training on the 30th.

VOTED: On a motion by Jane Santinelli, seconded by Karen Krone to adjourn the meeting. The time was 10:50 p.m. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

Yes Bill Braun

Yes Jane Santinelli

Yes Rich Robison

Yes Karen Krone

Yes Kathy Precourt

Submitted by Joanne Bleiler, Recording Secretary

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