

Sudbury Public Schools  
Sudbury, Massachusetts  
School Committee Special Meeting  
Saturday, April 5, 2008

Present: Susan Iuliano, Chairperson, Jane Santinelli, Vice Chairperson  
Rich Robison, Bill Braun, Jeff Beeler

Also Present: Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent, Mary Will, Director of Business & Finance

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 a.m. in the Superintendent's conference room at the SPS District office.

#### Open Forum I

Jeri Tarini, Ruddock Road, indicated that parents were ready and willing to raise money for the district to reduce the number of teachers laid off. She knew HOP (Haynes Organization of Parents) would be active and that she would help work with the other PTO's to do the same.

Sergio Alvarez, Willard Grant Road, is dismayed at the projected enrollment in 4th grades in all schools, noting that there are close to 30 kids in some classes. He inquired if the district has looked at other options instead of reducing classroom teachers. He expressed a willingness to move to more of a fee-based system. He stated his belief that there are areas in Special Ed that have potential to be fee-based.

Jeri Tarini inquired why the "system administration" line item in the operating budget appears to be 7% greater than in FY08. Mary Will responded that there are new charges being more appropriately included in this line item than were included in the past. The Town is now assessing costs to SPS that hadn't been assessed before, e.g., portion of the Town audit. Also, a METCO tutor was included in this line item for FY09, along with the associated offset since the position is grant funded.

Lisa Gutch, Silver Hill Rd, noted that at a recent principal's coffee, the question of cutting Spanish at the elementary level came up. She asked if this would save money that could be used for additional teachers. She also asked if parents are charged for pull-out music programs. Susan Iuliano responded that there is no charge for any class or program provided within the school day. Regarding Spanish, Susan noted that students have to be somewhere during the required time set aside each day for the classroom teacher's preparation and communications; if students are not in Spanish, they would have to be another class with a licensed teacher.

#### SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORT

#### SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Discussion of FY09 Budget

Jane Santinelli updated the Committee on the efforts of the Budget Working Group (BWG). The BWG decided that \$248,000 in additional State aid was certain enough to ask Town Meeting to appropriate. Although the budget cuts/reductions are proportional to the percent each cost center represents of the total town budget, the cuts seem more devastating for K-8. The 3 cost centers collaborated to allocate \$23,000 to the Town to cover a portion of the shortage due to snow and ice removal and \$225,000 to SPS.

John Brackett reviewed one possible allocation of \$225,000 that was developed from the leadership team (SALT). The plan included adding back 0.5 secretary at ECMS, with the remaining amount applied to teachers and CIT. This attempts to address the greatest identified needs and the past decision parameters discussed with the Committee. Prior to finalizing a recommendation, the administration would like direction from the Committee and additional time to look at enrollment projections and needs.

Rich Robison asked about the impact on losing kindergarten assistants. There was general discussion about allocation between classroom teachers and unified arts, as well as maintaining curriculum specialists' services. Also noted was that Social Studies will be tested on MCAS for first time next year.

Bill Braun indicated that he is comfortable with putting additional State aid money into staff, and generally in favor of the administration's suggestion to maintain curriculum specialist staffing. He commented that specialists are seldom added back after they are cut. Rich Robison indicated the need for a clear justification for the positions, as well as the need for a reminder that the expectations for achievement gains continue to rise regardless of budget reductions. There was consensus among the Committee members to proceed as described by John Brackett.

### 3. Approval of Fees for FY09

John Brackett explained the recommended increases in Athletic and Activity fees. Athletic fees would be raised to \$195 for the first sport/\$95 for subsequent sports, and Activity fees (including the Select music groups at ECMS) would be raised to \$50 per activity. Bill Braun emphasized that the goal is not to subsidize other programs. John Brackett indicated that the projections do not include the attrition of participants as a result of the increases. Jane Santinelli asked about the availability of scholarships, given that the increases might also increase the need for assistance. She wondered if it is possible for PTO's to take on a greater role in budgeting for scholarships. Susan Iuliano asked about the criteria for scholarships, noting that students eligible for free or reduced lunch are exempt from bus fees.

VOTED: On a motion by Bill Braun, seconded by Jane Santinelli, to approve the recommendation to raise Athletic and Activity fees as presented. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

John Brackett reviewed the increase in transportation fees approved by the Committee at its last meeting. The approved fee is \$350 for the first rider with a family maximum of \$635. A 10% attrition rate was included in setting these rates. The intent is to have all

non-mandated transportation supported by fees. For this presentation, the attrition rate was factored at 15% to show the elasticity of the fees. The rates also assume that one less bus will be used in the future. This reduction is not the result of greater efficiency, but cuts in services through reduced stops and routes.

#### Preparation for Town Meeting

Susan Iuliano explained that 10 minutes was allocated for the presentation by all cost centers. Finance Committee member Bob Jacobson will give the presentation for all three cost centers.

The Committee discussed several possible issues that might be raised at Town Meeting. These included the following: questions about the additional State aid and its recommended use, possible motions to move money from one cost center to another, and attempts to reduce taxes instead of appropriating the additional revenue.

There was an inquiry about whether the Committee would take a position on the Affordable Housing articles in the warrant. The Committee does not normally take a stand on issues not directly involving the schools. The Town housing staff questioned that position and Susan Iuliano agreed to add this to a future agenda for discussion.

There was an additional inquiry about whether the Committee would comment on senior tax relief. The Committee will not take a position.

#### 5. Open Forum II

David Block, Martin Drive, questioned if activity fees and bus fees can be carried over to possibly lower the fees in the future. Bill Braun reiterated that the Committee does not believe we should have user fees at all, that we are in a situation with no choice but to have fees, but that the Committee will not approve the use of fees to subsidize other programs.

Lisa Gutch asked what would happen if Town Meeting voted against non-override budget. The Committee discussed the likelihood that a non-override budget at some level will be approved at Town Meeting.

Jeri Tarini raised questions about maintaining curriculum specialists in lieu of classroom teachers.

The meeting was adjourned at 10 a.m.

Recorded by John Brackett, Superintendent  
Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary