

Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday, March 12, 2008

Present: Susan Iuliano, Chairperson, Jane Santinelli, Vice Chairperson (8:30)
Members: Rich Robison, Jeff Beeler, Bill Braun
Also Present: Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent, Robert Milley, Assistant
Superintendent, Mary Will, Director of Business & Finance, David Jurewicz, SEA (until
10:35)

Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

Open Forum I
No comments.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORT

Bill Schedule

A bill schedule was presented.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

4. Recognition

Superintendent Brackett recognized Nixon fourth grade teacher Melissa Morabito, who was one of six local recipients of an Excellence in Education award from the The Goldin Foundation for Excellence in Education. The award recognizes demonstrated excellence in classroom teaching, promotion of students' academic and social growth, and service to both the school and community at large. Ms Morabito will be honored at a reception in April and \$500 will be awarded to the school for her use.

Curtis Middle School students Jody Henkels (6), Elise Regensburger (6), Catherine Beer (7), Nick Santangelo (7), Shruti Saini (7), Drew Blazewicz (7), Mandy Sefferlen (7), and Caitlin Whitney (8) were recognized for representing Curtis in the 2008 Youth Art Month exhibition at the Worcester Art Museum. The exhibit runs March 1-31. Their participation in this non-competitive program was arranged by Curtis art teacher Ron Darzen.

5. District Technology Plan Update

Bob Kavanagh, Director of Technology, Michael O'Brien, Network Manager, and Donna Criswell, Curriculum Integration Specialist presented an overview of the District Technology Plan, which includes technology initiatives and budget considerations designed to address needs over the next three years and beyond. Curriculum and learning goals were developed in part based on recently piloted technology programs such as mobile labs and ActivBoards. The plan also outlines goals for updating infrastructure and policies, expanding on teacher professional development and support, and the use of

open-source software. The budget considerations and timelines represent a conservative approach aimed to limit expenses to approximately \$150,000 per year.

Committee comments focused on the need to ensure that necessary "maintenance" costs remain distinct from costs for expansion and improvements. Bob Milley noted that some districts include the maintenance costs within the Utilities budget, rather than the Technology budget. The need to replace hardware on a regular and rolling basis was also recognized, as was the value of ActivBoards in the classroom. Considerations are underway for how best to expand their use.

6. FY09 Budget & Budget Balancing Plans

Superintendent John Brackett highlighted the proposed cuts, including those to personnel that would be necessary under a non-override or Override 1A scenario. He also reported on the impact such reductions would have on class size, noting that, even with Override 1A, the education delivered will be significantly altered from the standard that residents have come to expect. It was emphasized that experience from extensive cuts made six years ago indicates that any cuts made now will likely not be restored: the finances necessary to maintain level service over time, accompanied by costs associated with restoring cut programs would create prohibitive override scenarios.

Reductions proposed in the number of curriculum specialists has the potential to halt currently underway curriculum initiatives, especially in light of the concomitant reduction in related professional development funds under a non-override scenario. Rich Robison suggested the possibility of redeploying curriculum specialists to the classroom, given that the standards-based curriculum is less vulnerable to inconsistencies across the district than may have occurred prior to the district's use of curriculum specialists. Bill Braun's view is that over time, the district is better served by having fewer, better qualified teachers with a sufficient number of curriculum specialists to ensure district-wide consistency.

Dr. Brackett asked for some direction on fees (e.g., transportation, activity). The Committee discussed increasing fees to cover the costs to serve users. While there was not agreement on the advisability of raising/charging fees, it was noted that increasing fees beyond those necessary to sustain the associated service/activity would be unacceptable. The Committee asked for specific information detailing the current fee structure as it relates to activity costs.

The consensus of the Committee is that, if either a non-override or Override 1A budget is implemented, the District should be clear to follow through on whatever reductions have been outlined.

The potentially confusing wording of the two March 31 ballot questions was noted, as was the generally low turnout at the budget forums.

9. Open Forum II

Mike Hullinger, Washington Drive, asked how the Town determines how the budget is distributed among the costs centers, as well as about the class size guidelines and how they are implemented.

Lauri Wishner, Fox Run Road, Vice Chair of the LS School Committee, noted that benefits costs for layoffs are higher for SPS compared to those for LS.

Beth Rust, Haynes Road, asked for a comment on the fact that at Haynes, the non-override class size and those with a level-staffing budget are quite similar. Superintendent Brackett noted that flat enrollment leads to changes that reduce the number of sections in some schools but not district wide.

Planning for Town Meeting

Susan Iuliano communicated the proposed structure for the Town Budget Forum scheduled for March 24. Her understanding is that two representatives of the School Committee will actively participate, with staff acting in a peripheral role. This differs from prior years in which the Superintendent has presented in a primary role. She will confirm the plan for the Budget Forum. The Committee agreed that Bill Braun will provide the presentation at the Budget Forum.

The Committee discussed the message it wants to convey, both at the Budget Forum and at Town Meeting. Important features include the following:

The long-range impact on the FinCom proposal to limit future overrides;

The actual tax dollar cost to the average taxpayer of the two overrides;

The actual numbers of personnel cuts proposed (26 with a non-override, 10 with Option 1A);

That the cuts will be to services, that is, that limited growth means limiting the growth of costs, not limiting the growth of services.

3. Out of State Field Trip

VOTED: On a motion by Bill Braun, 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.

9. Minutes □ Regular Session, February 6, 2008

VOTED: On a motion by Bill Braun, seconded by Jeff Beeler, to accept the minutes of the February 6, 2008 Regular Session as amended. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

Members Forum

John Brackett emphasized that the SPS District seems to be the cost center most significantly affected by a non-override or Option 1A override budget.

On a motion by Bill Braun, seconded by Jane Santinelli, the Committee voted to adjourn the Regular Session. The vote was 5-0 in favor. The time was 11:55 p.m.

Yes Rich Robison
Yes Bill Braun
Yes Susan Iuliano
Yes Jane Santinelli
Yes Jeff Beeler

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary