

TOWN OF RAYMOND
401 Webbs Mills Road
Raymond, Maine 04071

BUDGET/FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Tuesday, March 26, 2008

ATTENDANCE: Rolf Olsen; Ralph Bartholomew; Dennis Cole; Jean Carter; Bob Gosselin; Susan Accardi; Charles Leavitt; and Marshall Bullock.

BUDGET/FINANCE COMMITTEE ABSENT: Jerilyn Ward

SCHOOL COMMITTEE: Teresa Sadak, Chairman; Kevin Woodbrey; Lisa Friedlander; Wendy Trask; and Roger Ginn.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE ABSENT: None.

STAFF ATTENDANCE: Norma Richard, Principal RES; Randy Crockett, Principal JSMS; Dot Mowatt, Business Manager.

OTHERS: Susan Gendron, Maine Commissioner of Education and approximately 40 others.

1. Call to order. Rolf Olsen called the meeting to order at 6:45 pm at the Broadcast Studio.
2. Teresa Sadak began the commentary saying that the School Board felt this was a barebones budget. They announced that there was an amount added from their last submission to the Budget Committee. There was a question as to why there wasn't any surplus this year to use to offset the budget. It was noted that the state subsidy had been drastically reduced. The decline in enrollment was taken into consideration and personnel were cut. Their policy wasn't changed i.e. transportation and class size. There will be lower reimbursement for several areas in the budget from the state i.e. special education. They would have liked to keep the operating budget below a 3% increase. The estimated tuition is included as of now, but it can change right up to the beginning of the fall classes. If a high school student needs special education classes then Raymond pays the regular tuition and whatever their extra charges are for special ed. Services, which can be billed to Medicaid, will not be billed next year by federal law. Schools like Spurwink will bill Medicaid directly now but when that is defunct, we will have to pay those charges. Transportation has increased along with tuition. Question as to whether Windham High School budgets for their special ed students from Raymond and then charges Raymond too. It was noted that the EPS was not based on the actual budget but what the state formula sets as our limit. It was asked if special ed referrals were included in this budget. It was determined that those that they know of were. Currently there are 122 students K-8 in special ed. Question total for special ed is \$879,710 plus administrative or tuition \$733,349 totaling \$1,613,059. There is no requirement that the special ed director be certified. The current director is halfway through her classes for certification.

It was asked where the \$145,000 was obtained which was raised at the special town meeting for air quality. \$849,000 was left from last year and \$153,000 was left after \$696,000 was taken out. Transfers of funding were questioned. The school balance forward's low level is a concern to the auditor.

Discussion about the use of the new 2 vans which are more economical to run than the buses. They are no longer contracting the Community Concepts for transportation. Question whether the bus routes have been changed or the use of the buildings to help fuel costs. Routes have been discussed but this budget has not been changed because the routes are the same as last year. There is a small decrease with fewer away games for the children. They locked in a price for fuel oil at \$2.17 per gallon for next year, \$3.89 is the current price for diesel. This year we're using \$2.89 for diesel, the same as the town because it's take from one tank.

This year's stipend for consolidation meetings is \$8,000 and also the current year. It wasn't budgeted in 2007-2008 but was taken from the Superintendent's budget because there was a cut in personnel hours.

Question as to the expense of personnel insurances i.e. superintendent position; estimated at \$16,080 (\$1,340 per month) for the superintendent and spouse; dental \$1,700 which she doesn't take but has a long term care plan instead; no life insurance. Those specific costs for fringe benefits will be obtained for the Budget Committee.

Question as to whether there might be a cost-sharing plan for high school students' transportation. They have talked about after school transportation, but they felt that it was something they should provide including extra curricular activities. They feel that the two vans will help as they configure transportation.

Discussion as to the under utilization of classroom space. Mr. Crockett said that if there are empty rooms the new circulation system might allow some savings in lowering the temperature. Moving the 5th grade to RES didn't make sense for many reasons primarily consolidation coming in those changes would probably be for only one year. They looked at the possibility however. Through consolidation it's possible that Windham students may come to Raymond K-8 which will utilize more space. The vacancy rates are 45% at RES and 34% at JSMS. Question whether there will be student shifting the first couple of years under consolidation. Answer was that the current consolidation committee would not have that decision. After consolidation there will be a totally new school board for the consolidated schools. It was stated that this would be the last independent budget before consolidation.

It was felt that the cost of transporting high school students from their homes to a bus pickup point was in this budget which has been allowed for years. They were considering capping the tuition rate instead of paying the state stated tuitions which they have been doing. There will be a town vote on school choice, and if it's decided to cap the tuition it will save about \$48,000. This will likely effect where special ed students go to school as well. If all high school students went to Windham, it would save further funds. If students were sent to private schools by their parents who paid the full tuition there would be a savings to the town there as well. The tuition Raymond would use this year is \$7,437 which is what Windham charges because that will be the only contract Raymond now has. Under consolidation we don't know what that cost would be.

Discussion about the school warrant articles for the annual town meeting.

There was a question why they didn't try to absorb the \$200,000 shortfall from the state in the budget. It was not possible because of the expenditures that we don't have control over i.e. transportation, special ed and tuition. They were not willing to cut essential personnel and programs.

Question about cost of photocopiers. It was stated that renewing the lease would be the most cost effective solution - a 5-year lease. Was this bid including the other town offices? Answer no.

Lights in the JSMS gymnasium are in the budget. Part of this cost can be recouped through a state grant.

There are 3 late buses which run three times a week over the full route. The cost would be about \$3.50 per mile for about 50 total miles daily for a total of about \$18,000 per year. Because of this all children have the opportunity to experience after school activities ranging from tutoring to sports. Some of these programs are available through grant money. About 60% of the students use the late bus depending on the day and time of year.

Student testimony.

There is \$3,000 in the budget for replacement of some of the Twenty First Century, Search Grant activities.

There are 142 students in K-3 with 3 teachers, 99 students in 3rd & 4th with 6 teachers, 122 students in 5th & 6th with 6 teachers, 104 students in 7th & 8th with 6 teachers. There are 1.5 ed techs in Title I classes and the rest are with special ed. Three ed techs in the classroom and one other have been withdrawn from the budget.

Susan Gendron explained that every community must have a budget validation referendum this year. Under consolidation each town will vote on the budget of the consolidated school system. A budget over EPS will have two referendum questions. Tuition calculation is figured with the old funding formula which the legislature hasn't changed. The EPS is a different formula. Once we are a Regional School Union (RSU) there will be only one tuition amount. Currently the School Board has the authority to make the decision about choice. However, once we're an RSU the new RSU school board has that decision. Before consolidation the governing body can make that decision. She said that the School Board could cap tuition. With the grandfathering of high school students, the RSU board will determine how much the town will pay for tuition. Mrs. Gendron said that could be negotiated including the siblings of the currently attending students. The RSU would pay their rate of tuition, the student's town would pay the difference from that and what the town has adopted if higher, and the parents the rest of the tuition.

Katrina, 33 Wawenock Road, encouraged the boards to keep the human element in mind and that the personnel cuts would impact the children in more than just education in the classroom. She asked that they keep the high level of education in Raymond for the betterment of the town.

Carrie Colby, 17 Zephyr Road, asked if increases in administration were contractual. Answer yes. She had concern about the size of the classes especially kindergarten because it was a child's first year in school.

It was noted that all contracts are negotiated which can have impacts in all the cost centers. Cuts in personnel are made by the School Board through the budget, but the actual cuts are done through the teachers union which is usually chosen by seniority. The Kindergarten classes will go from 13 children to 16 per classroom at the present known enrollment.

Frank McDermott, 10 McDermott Road, had concern about the special education budget. The results from the use of the budget is well worth the effort. He felt that because of special education places like Pineland Hospital now don't exist. He said it is money well spent. A rebuttal said that the fact of special ed was not in doubt, but he had concern about the cost of the administration. It was noted that this is an unfunded mandate.

Susan Crockett, 7 Cape Road, questioned the classroom population and had concern about large classes. The teacher assignments have not been made as yet. The problems with the kindergarten students are varied and extensive in some cases. These students need smaller classes.

Gordon Street, 104 Webbs Mills Road, questioned the loss of revenue and lack of budgetary increase. He was impressed with their budget. Town share was up 3.34% and he asked what it would do to the mil rate. Estimated mil rate 11.5 or on a \$300,000 valuation would be about a \$300 increase. The raise in operating budget is about \$111,000 and the rest of the increase is the loss of state revenue.

The balance of the budget which comprises the town services has to be considered as well as the school budget because it represents the health and welfare of everyone in town.

Steve Catir, 109 Webbs Mills Road, felt that education was paramount in the health of our town, state and nation. The loss of school services will hurt us in the long run. If anything we should be spending more for education rather than cutting it. He asked that high school choice be maintained even if the tuition isn't any more than that allowed for the consolidated high school tuition.

It is a fact that we've increased the per pupil cost every year for the last 15 years at least. One hoped that the fact that this passion translates to volunteer and elected positions being filled. At the present time participation in town committees is limited to a few.

NEXT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING: Monday, March 31, 2008 7:00 pm at the Jordan Small Middle School cafeteria for the 2008-2009 School Budget.

NEXT BUDGET/FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING: Tuesday April 1, 2008 at 7:00 pm at the Broadcast Studio.

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING: Wednesday, April 2, 2008 at 6:30 pm at the Broadcast Studio. The agenda will be to vote on the final 2008-2009 School Budget.

ADJOURNMENT: Rolf Olsen adjourned the meeting at 9:30 pm.

Louise H. Lester

Town Clerk