

Budget/Finance Committee and School Committee
Meeting Minutes
2004-2005 Budget
Monday, March 15, 2004

Attendance: Rolf Olsen, Chairman Budget/Finance Committee; Wayne Holmquist; Suzanne Brockelbank; Jane Jordan; Louise Murray; Sandra Caldwell, Superintendent; Brenda Stevenson, Chairman School Committee; Lisa Friedlander; Frank McDermott; Gerry Keane; Norma Richard, Principal RES; Charles Miller, Principal JSMS; Meg Waters, Director Special Education; Dot Mowatt, School Business Manager; and Selectmen Betty McDermott and Dana Desjardins.

1. Call to order. Rolf Olsen called the meeting to order at 7:22 pm at the Town Office.
2. Discussion and approval of proposed Fiscal Year 2004-2005 School Budget.
DISCUSSION: Mr. Olsen opened by saying that this would be an informational meeting and no voting would be done until the meeting on March 22nd.

Ms. Caldwell explained that this budget reflected the desire to have Raymond's children learn in a safe, clean, welcoming environment. They also wanted to keep their excellent workforce, and to keep the teacher/student ration as low as possible. They have added transportation for fieldtrips, put in summer school, and brought the supplies line back to an adequate level. A new math program for K-8 is proposed as well as an increase in the Technical Department for the laptop program. They would like to continue building maintenance in a proactive manner. A new bus is needed to replace one that is not worth repairing because of the high mileage and cost of repairs. Repair of steps at Jordan-Small and the hot and cold water system is necessary this year. There will be some reallocation of staff to keep the current teachers i.e. Ed Tech from Special Education to regular education. She said they tried to formulate this budget with sensitivity to the taxpayer's concerns. The reallocation figures from the state subsidy will be going up to 7.4% for the town's share. They are trying to work with and toward maintaining the concepts in Chapters 125 and 127. Ms. Caldwell provided new pages of the budget 1 & 5 for the Budget Committee. Mrs. Stevenson informed the Committee that the blue page in their notebook showed the cost of tuitioning for high school and special education and the pink page noted items like insurance costs which is now a place holder sheet. She continued that the summer salary issue mentioned by the auditors would be left as it was for this year. Mr. Olsen added that he felt it was prudent to wait until the state decided how it was going to deal with towns that have been doing it this way for years.

Mr. Olsen asked that they discuss the highlights of the budget. Mrs. Stevenson said that one issue was the fee schedule for the use of the school buildings. The cost of maintaining

the schools for other than school use was now included in the budget i.e. janitorial staff work. The School Committee felt that only those functions which were of a private nature would be charged. Mr. Holmquist suggested that they comment on any line in the budget which has a 20% or higher increase.

Norma Richard:

Line 31 - repair pianos

Line 32 - printer and supplies to central printer which previously was budgeted in the classroom

Line 34 - new math curriculum which was cut from the budget last year. This will be a two year commitment.

Line 71 - addition of 1 Ed Tech 1 to help teachers which will be a shift from a position in Special Ed. This position will be shared between JSMS and RES.

Line 79 - this was cut from last year's budget.

Line 93 - this is for building maintenance or equipment i.e. window glass replacement and fence around playground.

Line 92 - Mr. Holmquist asked if the snow plowing was put out to bid. Mrs. Mowatt replied that it was. Ms. Caldwell said that the change this year is that the expense is listed on their books instead of considered a trade off with the town.

Line 99 & 100 -Mrs. Brockelbank asked if JSMS was checking their heating system especially in the gymnasium because it's always so hot in there. Mr. Miller replied that the heating engineers had been looking at it for the last two weeks and can't seem to find out why they can't regulate it better. They would be having a manufacturer's representative come in to look at it. There was discussion about the price of heating oil and propane. Mrs. Mowatt assured them that the school was trying to get the best possible price.

Line 116 - Mr. Miller said this was for texts for the new math series. Mrs. Richard added that it also was for teacher training, development and support.

Line 135 & 137 - Mr. Miller explained that this adjusted the nurse to full time which will be split between JSMS and RES.

Line 109 - Mrs. Brockelbank noted this was as discussed before.

Line 155 - Mr. Miller said this was an added secretarial position for him and a full time librarian.

Line 170 - this is to cover the increased use of the building i.e. janitorial staff

Line 176 - this is the same purpose as the RES line.

Line 177 - Mrs. Stevenson noted this was for the repair of the steps at JSMS. Mr. Miller said this would also repair some doors, ceiling tiles and other items which have become safety issues. Mr. Olsen asked why these things weren't taken care of during the building rehabilitation a couple of years ago. Mr. Miller couldn't answer because he wasn't there then but said that he was trying to keep up with repairs as needed. Mr. Olsen felt that possibly a full assessment should be done and if many things are found to be needed then a bond should be used to get everything done and not do it piecemeal. Mr. McDermott noted that this partly is a moving target with the state changing its requirements from time to time without forewarning. However, he felt that the assessment might be good idea.

Line 210 - Mrs. Waters said that this was for benefits which were not included in previous budgets.

Mr. Olsen asked if the tuition rate was different than what was expected. Mrs. Mowatt replied that they are estimating it being \$210 over last year but with fewer children than expected. She said there would be 267 students in all for tuition next year at this point.

Line 217 - Mrs. Waters said this would cover one student in a special program.

Line 216 – this is the actual cost as it now exists which wasn't included in the budget before.

Line 224 – this was actual equipment which was included in supplies before.

Line 219 – this was for a new student in a private facility and not in our schools.

Mrs. Waters added that these placements cost between \$30,000 and \$40,000 each.

Line 237 – this is so that a team of teachers can attend seminars.

Line 247 – Mrs. Mowatt noted that this covers all Special Ed.

Line 267 – Ms. Caldwell indicated this was for teacher's training.

Line 269 – this will support the developmental reading testing results.

Line 282 – for licensing and software

Line 283 – video projectors and cameras to support the laptop program.

Line 293 – for legal expense concerning the negotiations with the support staff

Mr. Holmquist felt that the auditor should note whether the items mentioned in the previous year's letter had been rectified or not. Mrs. Caldwell replied that it was noted in the management letter and said that the letter could be included in the budget papers in the future.

Mrs. Mowatt indicated that this year's balance forward was \$170,000. Mrs. Stevenson explained that there was a letter on the website explaining this as "Facts Concerning Balance Forward". It was pointed out that this money must be voted on by the town in order to use it. There was discussion of using it for one time purchases instead of having those purchases in the budget. Mr. McDermott felt that possibly it should be saved especially where we don't know whether the tax cap will be adopted.

Line 304 – This was a cost shift from another account and the cost has increased.

Line 305 – Same as above.

Line 316 – this was in line with other AV factors.

Line 301 – Mrs. Brockelbank asked if this decrease was a shift of accounts.

Line 325 – Ms. Caldwell explained that this was for actual substitute bus drivers.

Mr. Olsen asked where the offset was in transportation which is now in Special Ed. Mrs. Mowatt explained that it was absorbed in the total Special Ed budget and under budgeted on the line item. Mr. Holmquist asked if this was a money shift. Mr. McDermott said that the School Committee votes on any request for the shifting of funds. He said they would look at this again before they met again with the Budget Committee on transportation.

Mrs. Brockelbank asked if they had plans to hire a new gifted and talented teacher. Ms. Caldwell replied that there is an advisory committee and a recommendation will be forthcoming. Mr. Holmquist asked if all the teachers qualified under "No Child Left Behind". Ms. Caldwell replied no but that each teacher will be profiled and helped to comply.

NEXT MEETING: The Selectmen will vote on the town budget tomorrow night, Tuesday, March 16th.

BUDGET COMMITTEE NEXT MEETING: March 22, 2004 at 7:00 pm at the Town Office.

NOTE: Mrs. Stevenson explained that the School Committee had tried to balance their budget with sensitivity toward the town's taxpayers. She wanted to avoid a repeat of last year's town meeting. She asked for suggestions as to how this can be accomplished. Mr. Olsen replied that the problem was that the people in dissent didn't appear at the public

hearings or discussion about the budget but waited until town meeting. He felt that the budget has to be publicized in any way possible. Mr. Holmquist added that it would be best if the budget was voted on line by line so that the public has a chance to look at each item individually and voted on accordingly. In this way an item could be cut or not on the vote of the people in attendance.

ADJOURN: Rolf Olsen adjourned the meeting at 9:15 pm.

Louise H. Lester
Town Clerk