

Raymond School Department

*In Raymond our vision is to prepare each child for a global society that is evolving and dynamic. With a strong foundation in basic knowledge, students will be effective communicators, and independent thinkers and problem solvers who exhibit evidence of emotional, physical and mental well-being.*

*Raymond schools will provide an excellent education and service to the community in a nurturing environment, preparing each student to be a competent, responsible citizen of the 21st century.*

## **Joint School Committee And Joint Budget Finance Committee Meeting**

**December 15, 2004  
Raymond Elementary School Library  
7:00 PM**

Roll Call: J. Keane, D. Adams, F. Dexter, L. Friedlander, B. Stephenson

School Staff: S. Caldwell, M. Waters, N. Richard, C. Miller, T. Taiani

Budget Finance Committee: Rolf Olsen, Suzanne Brockelbank, Jean Carter, Frank McDermott, Ralph Bartholomew, Louise Murray, David Rowe, Dennis Cole

Public: Charles Leavitt,

Mr. Olsen started the meeting by stating the purpose for meeting with the School Board. They will finalize the budget timeline, begin the dialogue about the budget process, and update recent developments coming from Augusta.

The proposed February 23 meeting date is moved to February 16 due to school vacation. The budget will be sent out to the Budget Finance Committee by February 4. Ms. Caldwell noted that the first draft of the budget would go to the School Committee on January 5 with some unknowns from the State.

The Budget Finance Committee has already held a preliminary conversation with the Selectboard.

L. Friedlander indicated that she has not heard much community feedback around the upcoming budget. B. Stephenson noted the concerns around expenses, unknowns around

State funding funneling into communities and the impact on the town's share of the budget, and the significant challenges these can present. L. Friedlander noted that the State's paying 55% of the cost of education does not mean that Raymond will receive 55% of its costs. Essential Programs and Services may mean making decision at the school or community level. There are a number of local unknowns related to negotiations with support staff and the teaching staff. This is a challenge when analyzing fixed costs.

Ms. Caldwell provided two overviews of the Essential Programs and Services model to the Budget Finance Committee. She explained the issues surrounding over funding or under-funding the recommended funding levels through the EPS model. Mr. Olsen asked if the EPS model addresses a tuition rate. J. Keane asked if Raymond's funding would be further reduced based upon the upcoming evaluation. Ms. Caldwell noted that might impact funding in another year.

School population is remaining stable with approximately 580 students in grades K – 8. High school enrollments are also pretty consistent.

J. Carter shared that people are concerned with the property tax amounts that go to the school versus to the town. B. Stephenson noted the One Raymond work and its potential to assist both the school and town. R. Olsen spoke to working on the communication side to get more information to the community and to get their input.

B. Stephenson asked if the presentation and format of the budget would change to tell a clearer story. Getting more information out as how the budget pertains to State guidelines will present some communication challenges.

The town's presentation of the budget is helpful to S. Brockelbank. There is information presented with each cost center to further explain any changes. L. Friedlander suggested having a public dinner to get a more diverse group to the school budget hearing. The committee further discussed the challenges of getting people to the budget meetings. S. Caldwell questioned how to bring this information to community groups.

S. Brockelbank asked if there would be actual expenses presented in the school budget format. These figures will be include this year. R. Olsen noted that highlighting the changes mandated by the State might get more people involved. He explained that any budget amount that is over the EPS level needs to be approved at referendum, voted on the day before town meeting. This means that any discussion will not take place at town meeting.

J. Keane asked if the district was required to be in line with the EPS levels. S. Caldwell explained that any budget line over the recommended levels would need to be clearly identified to the community as a local initiative. F. McDermott further clarified this. S. Caldwell noted the many challenges in developing the school budget.

J. Carter spoke to the 1976 referendum on the Uniform Property Tax and the increased money to the State that did not go to schools. She noted the differences in expectations today. The Committees further discussed property tax issues.

J. Keane shared her understanding that it will be much more difficult to present and explain the budget this year and is looking to the Budget Finance Committee for assistance. S. Caldwell explained the newly formed school alliance neighboring districts for sharing resources and possibly reducing costs.

R. Olsen reviewed that keeping the lines open and figuring out the best ways to get the information to the community are important to both Committees. S. Caldwell noted that there will be some uncertainty and to let people know that there may not be immediate answers to all questions.

S. Brockelbank asked if there were any big expenses on the horizon. S. Caldwell noted that they are getting an estimate for the underground tank at the middle school.

Move to adjourn at 8:08 PM.