

Wakefield Budget Committee Meeting  
Wakefield School Budget  
12-14-09, 6:30 PM, Paul School  
Minutes – Unapproved

In attendance:

Budget Committee – Howie Knight, Denny Miller, Liz Olimpio, Jan Gagnon (school board rep), Connie Twombly, Asha Kenney, Dave Mankus, Judy Nason, Dean Giffin, Relf Fogg, Mark Duffy

School Board – Peter Kasprzyk, Patrick Troy (Paul School principal), Bonnie Cyr, Scott Reuning (Spec Ed coordinator), Gail Kushner (superintendent), Toby Eaton (SAU business mgr)

Mr. Knight opened meeting at 6:30 with Pledge of Allegiance, and then opened discussion of the Paul School budget.

Mr. Knight asked for confirmation that “Elementary School Salaries” reflects no increases in pay and the reduction in force. Mr. Eaton confirmed this. Ms. Nason then referred the group to Teacher Salaries exhibit, wondering if it reflected current or future staffing and why it didn’t match the budget line. Ms. Kushner confirmed it was current. In order to get to budget line, taking the \$1,399,253, deduct 1 teacher and add 40% more salary for Cuddy. This would be the budget line figure of \$1,385,749.

Mr. Knight then moved on to “Teachers Health Insurance” line, wondering how many individuals were added as buffer last year. Mr. Eaton confirmed 4. Ms. Nason then wondered how many teachers purchased which kind of program, and the costs of each at 88%. Mr. Eaton provided the following (prices are per participant):

1. Single plan – 23 participants – POS plan \$8,089, HMO plan \$7,223
2. 2 Person plan – 13 participants - \$14,446
3. Family Plan – 16 participants - \$19,504
4. Buybacks – 7 participants @ \$1,500

Mr. Miller noted that the full cost of the Family plan was \$22,164, and wondered if this plan didn’t fall into Mr. Obama’s definition of a Cadillac plan that would be subject to additional taxation under his new health insurance program? He also wondered why the School plan was so much more expensive than the Town plan. There was then conversation about the purchase process. Mr. Eaton said that the School has gone to 3 sources:

- a. Local Gov’t Center (LGC), which uses Anthem and is the Town vendor,
- b. Pilgrim and
- c. School Care, which uses CIGNA and is the School Vendor.

Mr. Duffy noted that the Town’s family plan cost \$15-18K. Mr. Knight suggested that it would be appropriate for the school’s health insurance to be put out to bid again. Ms. Gagnon while agreeing with Mr. Knight, reminded the group that health insurance criteria are part of the teacher union negotiations not something that the Board can change on it’s own. Ms. Olimpio wondered why there were only 3 choices. Mr. Eaton responded that the teacher contract requires teacher approval of vendors approached as

well as coverage criteria. Ms. Nason wondered about part-timers allowed to by health insurance. She was advised that 3 bus drivers & 1 per in food service are allowed by contract to buy in. Ms. Nason then noted that the line usually comes in under budget and wondered how under budget this line came in last year. Mr. Knight wanted to make sure that a buffer of 4 was still appropriate. Mr. Eaton noted that he believes so. Mr. Eaton also noted that if all eligible purchased maximum plan available, the health insurance line overall could exceed \$1M. He then went on to confirm that the Dental plan, which is paid 100%, increased 5.5% as noted last week, is a fixed cost with LGC.

Discussion then moved to “Public Tuition” line. Mr. Miller noted that Budget Committee had reduced student count by 6 last year, and wondered if this was still a valid number, especially in light of new “drop out law” requiring students to stay in school to age 18 instead of 16. Ms. Gagnon responded that it still seems to work, but there is some concern because of the new law. Mr. Knight noted that there is still no history to work with from the new law, and Rochester doesn’t yet have its budget in place. He wondered how from the new tuition number was. Ms. Nason noted that it’s based on previous year’s data, not current year. No one appeared to know the formula, and Mr. Knight wondered if the SAU reviews that calculation. Ms. Gagnon urged the Committee to not increase the “reduction number” because there isn’t any room in the budget to cover an increase in student population. Ms. Nason asked about student counts by grade. Mr. Eaton provided the following information:

Currently – 46 in 8<sup>th</sup> grade  
65 in 9<sup>th</sup> grade  
50 in 10<sup>th</sup> grade  
53 in 11<sup>th</sup> grade  
44 in 12<sup>th</sup> grade

In addition, he noted that there are 208 in Spaulding High School, with 3 in the Bud Carlson program, 3 more in the Transition program, 11 at Kingswood and 1 at Nute. Mr. Reuning reminded the Committee that this line represents the basic student costs and that addition costs, because of special ed requirements are included in “Special Ed Tuition-Public” line. Ms. Nason then asked if there was enough money in the line. Mr. Eaton noted that the 1<sup>st</sup> Spaulding bill had just come in, and should be analyzed soon. Ms. Nason asked that it be ready for 12-22-09 meeting.

Mr. Miller asked about the increase in the Special Ed “Summer School” line. Mr. Reuning responded that he’d increased the budget to reflect the previous year’s actual cost. There were more children in the program than had been anticipated. He went on to explain that Sped Summer School is different that regular summer school. It’s less about scholastics and more about extending school year services, evaluation, regression standards, how long it takes students to recoup knowledge, etc. Generally it lasts 6 weeks, 4-5 hrs/day for 4-5 days/week.

Ms. Nason observed that the “Spec Ed Teachers Salary” line appears high in light of 1 teacher reduction proposed. Should be closer to \$33,600. Mr. Miller than wondered about the \$21K increase in “Spec Ed Contract Srvs”. Mr. Reuning responded there were increased adjustments across the board based on an estimated 7-15% increase. Mr.

Reuning went on to explain that SAU uses Childfind to help school identify 3-4yr olds in need, as specified by law; that the speech & occupational therapist on contracted full time employees because that's the least expensive way to have them in the school; that Case-e is the info system in place and that buying another system would be counterproductive; and that the school has a continuing but not full time need for a physical therapist, vision specialist; and that the counseling/evaluation item is necessary because parents have the right to ask for independent evaluations for which the school must pay. Ms. Nason wondered how many "speech" needs students we had to warrant a full time speech therapist. Mr. Miller wondered about the physical therapist, and why the school was required to provide this, rather than the parents. Mr. Reuning explained that the school is required by law to provide physical therapy at the school for school environment issues for the significantly disabled. In addition, he reminded the Committee that 50% of the expense is Medicaid reimbursable.

In opening discussion of the "Spec Ed Tuition-Public" line, Mr. Knight asked about the success of the new autism program and was assured that it was saving money over sending Wakefield's 1 child to an outside program. Mr. Miller asked for confirmation that Bright Beginnings was limited to 3-4 yr olds, observing that it's costing as much as kindergarten. Mr. Reuning confirmed the age group, and reminding the Committee that as an early intervention program, it's designed to ensure student success when entering school. Please remember that kindergarten has more learning & less play time at present, so the Bright Beginnings helps prepare needy children for the tougher curriculum. Cost is split between Milton & Wakefield on a per child basis, and Wakefield currently has 15 children in the program.

Mr. Reuning then went on to remind the Committee that the "Spec Ed Non-Public Elem & Middle" line items would each be increasing by \$40,330.50 because of the 2 new placements mentioned last week. With regard to "Spec Ed Non-Public High" line, he reminded the Committee about catastrophe caps that that anything over \$33,000 was recoupable.

Before leaving the "Special Ed" lines, Mr. Knight confirmed that the total for the line should be \$1,671,581.81, subject to further adjustment.

Mr. Knight observed that the Co-Curriculum "After School Program" line is up, and wondered why. Mr. Troy explained that student & teacher participation is up.

Ms. Nason wondered if it was possible for the Social Worker on staff to handle Truant Officer responsibilities. Mr. Troy responded that he didn't think so. One was a "policing" position, the other a "how can I help" position, and he didn't think the social worker would be as effective if saddled with policing duties. Ms. Gagnon noted that the Truant Officer position is not salaried. Rather, it is more of a stipend. He's paid for a specified number of days at a contracted rate-but he's available when ever the school needs him. He uses his own vehicle, etc. Mr. Mankus observed that Mr. (Wayne)\_\_\_\_\_size assists in his success. Mr. Duffy noted that because of his work with Parks & Rec, he already knows many of the teens involved.

Ms. Kenney wondered if Saturday Detention was necessary, how students arrive, and is there no other way. Mr. Troy responded that Saturday detention reinforces the consequences part of “acting up”. Parents are required to deliver students to the school, and he finds the practice to be effective. It also allows for growing consequences for continuing problems. Ms. Twombly asked if there is still “in school suspension”. Mr. Troy confirmed it is still a practice limited to serious problems, with oversight by principal or vice principal. The next step is out of school suspension.

Mr. Mankus wondered about parental volunteering. Ms. Colbath, as the board member overseeing the volunteer program, is renewing an old initiative, noting that there are currently 15 individuals, not limited to parents volunteering, and that she has received interest indications from 30 more. Teachers have identified what kind of volunteer services they could use, as well as food service and office needs. The volunteer program is outlined on the school’s website, and Ms. Colbath urged anyone interested to please call. In addition, she mentioned that she’s looking for a Program Coordinator.

In the “Guidance” lines, Mr. Miller asked for confirmation that the \$10,512 item is for the part-time person Ms. Kushner mentioned when discussing the termination of the 2<sup>nd</sup> social worker position. He also wondered about the \$963 for “support retirement”. Mr. Eaton confirmed that it is the part-time clerical position, and that the retirement line is subject to state mandated minimums.

Mr. Miller asked if the Board was still happy with the Reading 1<sup>st</sup> program & it’s results. Mr. Troy assured the Committee that they were, that data is now available to shows that expectations have been achieved, noting that Wakefield was able to get a 4<sup>th</sup> year grant for a 3 yr program. Mr. Miller wanted to make sure that the teachers were all set to continue the program without a full time Reading 1<sup>st</sup> teacher now that the grant has expired. Mr. Troy said that they are, but that there is a Reading 1<sup>st</sup> coach coming in 2 days a week to monitoring, coaching, etc. Ms. Nason observed that this year’s 3<sup>rd</sup> grade should demonstrate an improvement in reading skills testing. Ms. Gagnon & Ms. Colbath responded that they have already seen improvements as shown in the power point slides.

Ms. Kenney observed that the nurse is very well paid for a professional not required to actually treat students. She also wondered if there was an assistant. Ms. Gagnon explained that the nurse is included in the teachers contract and is paid based on the teachers salary scale, and that no, the nurse did not have an assistant. She went on to remind the Committee that the LPN on salary is a special ed hire for 1 particular student. When the student does not come to school, this LPN does help out wherever needed.

Mr. Miller observed that the Librarian Health insurance cost was shown as down and wondered about accuracy. It was confirmed that this was a valid figure.

Within the “School Board” lines, Mr. Miller asked about the \$42,000 increase in legal expenses. The Board observed that it covered various previously understated items,

including but not limited to labor negotiations. He then asked if a lawyer was present for all the paraprofessional negotiations meetings. Mr. Kasprzyk responded that the Board did have legal representation at all the meetings, including with the mediator & fact finder, and obviously at court because it was important that everything be done as correctly as possible the 1<sup>st</sup> time. With union negotiations it's very hard to get something removed once it's included. Ms. Nason wondered whether there was a retainer. Ms. Kushner said that the Board does not have an attorney on retainer. Mr. Reuning noted that because of special issues with "Special Ed" he does have someone on retainer at the Board's attorney's office, but couldn't remember how much. Mr. Knight observed that the Board might want to look into a retainer. Ms. Kushner observed that when ever possible she used the free services of the School Board Association attorney. Ms. Kenney wondered about the cost/hour and Mr. Eaton responded that it varied, but was generally \$120-165/hr.

Mr. Fogg wondered about the \$44K reduction in the SAU line and was reminded that this line is now being addressed as a separate warrant article, and its budget would be reviewed next week.

Mr. Miller observed that he would like to meet the new Vice Principal, perhaps at 12-22-09 meeting.

Moving on to the "Operations/Maintenance" lines, Mr. Miller asked about the increase in the salary line. Ms. Gagnon noted that these were actual salaries now that school is no longer contracting custodial services. She went on to say that the line reflects what the Board anticipates paying in salaries including our portion of the new Facilities Director position. Mr. Eaton noted that the custodial staffing is outlined in the exhibits distributed last week. Ms. Nason wondered why the line was up when we'd been told that by combining the Director position with Milton we'd see a reduction. Mr. Miller observed that the "Operations/Maintenance" & "Transportation" lines were up a net of \$12,000, that might be lower depending on diesel & oil costs, etc, that would be finalized by March. He went on to ask if the Board would allow the Committee to cut \$12,000 from the bottom line if the Board was so confident that the combined lines would in fact see a savings by combining positions, etc. Mr. Eaton indicated he could provide a better projection. He also noted that the current figure does not reflect a recent resignation, or adjustment for the new position. He went on to note that he was working with the consortium through whom school buys oil, and the state is still negotiating diesel costs, so those items will be changing.

Mr. Knight moved on to the "Care of Bldg" item, wondering how much of the \$14,650 was cosmetic in nature. Mr. Kasprzyk responded that he didn't see any of it as cosmetic. The ground floor bathrooms need to be totaled redone, preferably in tile at least partially up the walls. He sees the current condition of these rooms as health hazards. In an attempt to keep the costs down, the Board is looking into having it done by staff. As to the roof, it needs patching. The rubber membrane actually needs to be replaced, but that will require a warrant article. Ms. Colbath admitted that in the past, maintenance was not given its appropriate importance, but that the Board now has a repair schedule and is

trying to be proactive. She went on to say that Mr. Troy is working through a series of fire code violations, prioritized by the fire department. E.g.: replacing door knobs with bars & levers. Ms. Nason observed that the rubber roof membrane should have lasted longer, but that perhaps a couple of bad winters rushed deterioration. Any chance the warranty might assist. Mr. Eaton responded that the roof is at least 10 years old and that the warranty has probably expired.

Ms. Nason wondered about the Bus Coordinator salary in the “Transportation “ line. It was confirmed that the \$45,000 salary is split 50/50 with Milton. Ms. Nason observed that she thought \$45,000 was a lot. Ms. Kushner noted that the responsibilities of the combined position was 2x the old. She added that it’s a salaried not hrly position, that in addition to coordinating activities, it could mean driving a route, and can be expected to not be an 8 hr day. Ms. Nason then went on to ask if Parks & Recs was required to pay for buses. Mr. Eaton responded that for the most part, parents delivered sports participants to event locations. During the summer, P & R does rent equipment. Mr. Knight wondered about the in the Sped driver salary line. Mr. Reuning asked him to look at the regular driver line – basically was a reclassification. Ms. Twombly wanted to make sure that the Board & Committee knew that she is still concerned about this new combined Coordinator position, worried that Wakefield will loose the level of service it has come to expect from it’s own coordinator. Ms. Gagnon said that the Board has had some of the same concerns, and will be evaluating the change during the year to make sure we don’t.

Ms. Gagnon then noted that she expects to have a warrant article for a new van this year, and that while it was deferred last year, a new 78 passenger bus needs to be leased this year or it will through the equipment update schedule off too far. Mr. Miller wondered about the switch to Freightliner. Mr. Eaton offered to have Tom attend next week’s meeting to review equipment needs. Ms. Colbath noted that she remembered a lower cost of repair and longer life as the primary reasons for the shift. Mr. Knight, looking at the gas/diesel line item wondered if school was currently over budget on this line. Mr. Eaton confirmed that we are. Mr. Miller wondered about fuel supplier. Mr. Eaton confirmed that buses gas up at state garages.

Moving on to “Information Services”, Mr. Miller wondered about the repair (\$10K) & replacement (\$4K) items. Mr. Eaton directed him to similar reductions in “Principal” lines – simply a redirection of allocation. Ms. Nason wondered about whether spending \$10K in repair of equipment made sense. Ms. Gagnon explained that there are some 273 computers in the school, with only 25 still under warranty. Cannibalizing to keep the rest of the equipment working makes economic sense. Just replacing batteries is expensive.

“Food Service” – Ms. Nason wanted to know about offsetting revenue, as this item was added some years ago with the intent that it would be self-sustaining. Instead, the town’s contribution continues to grow. Mr. Eaton confirmed that we get some foodstuffs from state surpluses as well as limited dollars. Ms. Gagnon reminded everyone that the kitchen does more than reheat prepared food. More often, it’s doing food prep and cooking. Mr. Eaton noted that we get about \$20,000 in offsetting dollars. Ms. Nason

than asked about pricing-increasing pricing. Ms. Gagnon responded that she has concerns about raising prices in this economy. While she did not have the formula, there's a scale of reimbursement for students on "free & reduced lunch program". The school has 3 prices: free, \$.40, and full price (@1.25). No cash is handled in lunch line. Each student has a prepaid card. Mr. Miller expressed concern that the town is paying \$150,000 for meals in town and another \$150,000 for school lunches. He observed that the town has seniors who can't afford to feed themselves whose taxes go to pay for other people's children's lunches. Food pantry use is up significantly. He wondered when parents started kicking in more. Mr. Eaton said that the Board is working on a report investigating the possibility of increasing lunch prices. Mr. Fogg wondered about reducing expenses in lieu of raising prices and conversation returned to food subsidies from state, etc. Mr. Mankus observed that the cause of this issue is way beyond the control of the School Board, but that the town must find a way to deal with the effect. Ms. Nason wondered if we're spending more for the "free & reduced lunches" than we get reimbursed by the state in addition to commodities. Ms. Kushner noted that we do get commodity, but that it is not always what we need.

Mr. Knight observed that the bottom line is \$14, 646 under last year's budget before adjustments and SAU budget shift, thanking the Board for its work. Mr. Miller seconded the thank you. Then Mr. Knight reviewed items held over for next week:

For 12-22-09 meeting:

1. Confirm figures between the teacher exhibit & budget line
2. Confirm current status of public tuition student counts & how tuition is calculated
3. Better handle on legal fee estimates & confirm amount of Special Ed legal retainer
4. Attendance by Paul School Vice-Principal
5. More detailed analysis of Operations/Maintenance & Transportation expenses, including diesel costs
6. Year end health insurance actual costs for 08/09, 09/10 to date & budget for 10/11
7. Reading 1<sup>st</sup> scoring data
8. Lunch costs

Going back to health insurance, Ms. Nason wondered how many program changes did we see last year to this year? Mr. Miller wondered about a cap to health insurance expenses. Mr. Eaton confirmed that the current contract includes an 88% cap of \$20K now. He also wondered what terms the teachers are getting that town employees are not that would account for the significant difference in price.

Ms. Nason then wondered about the full day kindergarten program and why it made more sense than ½ programs. Ms. Kushner said that full day classes give more time to students for learning & socialization. Much of what used to be part of 1<sup>st</sup> grade curriculum is now taught in kindergarten, so in ½ sessions there is little time for socialization. Research shows longer days reap better long-term results.

Ms. Kenney asked for confirmation that dental insurance is paid at 100%. It is.

Ms. Nason noted that year after year the Committee & Town hear about what programs are supposed to do, but then don't come up to expectations. She expressed concern about this trend and asked the Board to tell her that there is a plan to improve quality of education, that current programs were working, and that the Board would continue to pursue ways to really improve the quality of education, not just move to the latest educational fad. Ms. Kushner responded that the focus monitoring the school has been under recently has forced the school to look "under a lot of rocks" for underlying causes of lack of success. She believes they now have a plan in place that will deliver a quality education, including more integration of special ed programs, more focus on reading and math in middle school areas, etc. The plan is in place, the school must meet requirements. All of this will take time, but benefits are already visible.

At 9:15 Ms. Twombly made motion to adjourn. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mr. Miller.

Respectively submitted by Deborah D. Gauthier