

Wakefield Budget Committee
Minutes of 12-22-09 Meeting at Paul School
Approved

In attendance

Budget Committee: Jan Gagnon, Connie Twombly, Dean Giffin, Relf Fogg, Dave Mankus, Dennis Miller, Judy Nason, Howie Knight, Asha Kenney

School Board: Patrick Troy, Gail Kushner, Toby Eaton, Scott Reuning, Priscilla Colbath, Peter Kasprzyk, Doug Perley (assistant principal)

Mr. Knight called meeting to order at 6:30 PM and called for Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Knight then reviewed the evening's agenda:

1. review questions left over from the last meeting
2. review warrants
3. review of SAU budget

Ms. Kushner began with a print out with outstanding questions/answers & supporting materials, and an updated version of the budget.

1. The elementary teachers salaries = \$1,385,749. This is the amount of next year's salaries line. We eliminated 1 position and put in the reading specialist at full time.
2. What was left at the end of the year (2008-2009) in the health insurance lines? \$12,231.98 (less than the cost of the two person policy). This includes the 4 person buffer established
3. What is the current year 09-10 cost of health insurance?

1 person	\$7,872	88%	-\$6,927
2 person	\$15,744	88%	-\$13,855
Family -	\$21,2252	88%	-18,702
4. What are the results of the Results of Reading First? Mr. Troy directed Committee to the attached report. After reviewing the report, he finished by says the proof is in the results:
 - in the Fall of 2006, the 3rd grade total proficiency rate was 81.25%
 - in the Fall of 2009, the total proficiency rate for these same children was 93.34%

Ms. Kushner observed that the Dibels scores are reviewed every 6 weeks
Mr. Miller asked which grades tested go into the results. Ms. Kushner replied that all grades are tested in Oct, so the results really reflect what was learned and retained from the previous year. Mr. Lee asked, from the audience, how accommodations effected the scores. Mr. Troy responded that they are used whenever possible. Mr. Miller wondered about Home Schoolers. Home schoolers are registered with the school, and are tested at the end of each year, but results are not included in NECAP results. Mr. Mankus wondered about student population shifts. Ms. Colbath noted that our student population is down, just like most of the state. Mr. Fogg wondered about the minimum age of home schoolers, and was advised that

it's generally grade 1. Mr. Miller wondered whether or not the school supplied texts & equipment and Mr. Mankus wondered about the costs of home schoolers to the district. Mr. Reuning responded that the school does not supply text material, but might make the school available for special classes-phy ed., art, etc, and for special needs identified during "child find" process. Mr. Miller asked for more information about special ed costs for home schoolers. Mr. Reuning said that these children can go through the standard IAP process with parents, and the district must provide services identified by IAPs.

5. What was our end of the year tuition numbers for 2008-2009?
Projection was 248 students
Money left in that line was \$34,432 (approximately 3 students)
Numbers estimated for next year totals 226.
Current Home School students – total 32
Zero home school students in grade 8
6. What did we pay for legal agreement?
\$500 per month/\$6,000
What did we pay for total legal fees in 2008/09? \$41,663.82

It was noted that the whole school does have a retainer for general services, not just the special ed department.

7. Double check the fuel line.
Fuel line is verified for \$78,970
8. Transportation/Facilities Reduction
Combined savings for both position for Wakefield \$27,250
Facilities has 4 employees-1 day, 3 night (2 of whom have medical insurance)
Model will vary depending on exactly who is hired for the manager position, salary & benefits package.
Ms. Nason asked for clarification of Health insurance costs. Mr. Eaton confirmed that the 1 day person, and 1 of the 3 night custodians get health insurance. He also said that the full insurance cost for the transportation coordinator was in Wakefield's budget and the insurance cost for facilities coordinator is in Milton's budget.
9. Warranty of roof membrane? Still looking to verify with Chip Krause and the subcontractor
(punctured when shoveling snow) Mr. Eaton explained that only 1 section of the roof is membrane – it's the center section where all the other roof lines direct water flow (area, when originally designed, was designed to be open, not roofed). Mr. Eaton is also looking into whether or not the contractor hired to shovel the roof 2 years ago had liability insurance.
Mr. Knight observed that there should have been a contract for these services and Mr. noted that he didn't think there was one.
10. Food Service – the Board voted to not increase the price of lunch
Ms. Gagnon noted that the Board has formed a committee to look into alternative pricing, including talking to state auditor. She went on to say that raising prices will not close the overrun gap that they need to better evaluate the cost of service vs. the costs to

provide, and what might be able to be changed. Mr. Knight wondered about turn around on state reimbursements. Mr. Eaton said it takes 2-3 weeks – very current. Mr. Miller recommended to Ms. Gagnon and individual he knows who's contracted to provide similar services to other area communities.

11. Transportation – leases of Freightliners – Mr. Eldridge was unable to attend this evening so he sent along a letter that outlines his reasons for leases with Freightliner. In essence, the warranty & service contract matches the lease contract. School pays for little except fuel and basic maintenance.

Ms. Nason then wondered about the teacher salary lines. She observed that the Board has decreased staff by 2 teachers & 3 paraprofessionals, but that the budget is actually up if these salaries are put back in. Why? Mr. Miller observed that the budget is a bottom line budget, which is down \$27,000 w/lots of ins & outs. Ms. Gagnon agreed, and pointed to costs like proactive maintenance plan as rising costs. Mr. Knight then asked for confirmation that between Milton & Wakefield, Facilities Coordinator will be responsible for 4 buildings. Toby confirmed this as correct.

Mr. Miller thanked the Board for good answers to old questions. Mr. Knight noted, in review of Ms. Nason's point, that the budget does not yet reflect any teacher or paraprofessional increases from negotiations.

Mr. Knight asked if there were any other questions on the general budget, observing that there will be additional meetings immediately after the Public Hearing & Deliberative Session.

Ms. Nason said that she had some issues to address:

1. Ms. Nason made motion to reduce the Spaulding student count by 6 students, acknowledging that the final number will be addressed just before the Deliberative Session. 2nd by Mr. Fogg. Discussion – reduction to budget \$65,034. Vote 9-0 in favor of motion
2. Ms. Nason made motion to reduce legal line by \$20,000 until such time as labor negotiations require addition sums. 2nd by Mr. Miller. Discussion: teachers are going into mediation and the paraprofessionals have 2 more meetings before the deliberative session, though an agreement needs to be reached by Jan. 12 (date of Public Hearing). Ms. Gagnon asked the Committee to be aware of several very delicate issues. Ms. Nason said that if it developed that more money would be needed, the line amount would be open to more discussion. Ms. Colbath ended the discussion with a suggestion that if the Board does not have labor agreements, the Committee would be willing to put the \$20,000 back in. Ms. Nason agreed that it would be possible, but essential that the Town understand why the cost is being increased. Vote 9-0 in favor of motion
3. Ms. Nason made motion to reduce water line by \$870.00. 2nd by Mr. Fogg. Discussion – Mr. Giffin confirmed that the water department is not contemplating an increase in water rates, so budget would need to be increased only if school expected water consumption to be up. Vote 9-0 in favor of motion.

Mr. Knight wondered about the pricing of the property & liability insurance. Mr. Eaton said that firm numbers would not be available for some time, certainly not before the Deliberative Session. Mr. Eaton confirmed that coverage is secured through the Emmanuel Insurance Agency, and that the insurance would probably be going out to bid in the Spring.

Mr. Miller made the motion to approve the budget with the aforementioned adjustments, at \$8,369,465.65. 2nd by Jan Gagnon. No further discussion. Vote 9-0 in favor of motion.

Moving on to the review of the Warrant Articles, Mr. Knight reminded the Committee that no votes would be taken on them because they are not complete. He also reminded the Committee that it does not need recommendation votes on articles that do not call for money assessments.

Article 2: the operating budget was confirmed at \$8,369,465.65 pending adjustments for tuition for students at Spaulding. In addition, the School Board has not yet delivered the default budget figure.

Articles 3, 4, 5 & 6: Mr. Giffin wondered why it also took so long to finalize the labor contracts. They (teachers/paraprofessionals) can drag it out forever. Ms. Nason observed that generally, if the collective bargaining doesn't pass, a special meeting article won't pass either, so it's in the unions' interest to work it out with the School Board.

Articles 7: overall conversation centered on how much of the school roof is involved and how essential the proposed replacement is. Mr. Eaton pointed out that the membrane section of the roof is the largest single section of the roof, covering a section of the building originally designed to be open. The remaining asphalt roof sections feed water onto the membrane section, which, while being at the outside end of its anticipated useful life as also been damaged during previous seasons snow removal processes. Mr. Knight, concerned about whether or not the roof was leaking, suggested that a Capital Reserve Fund for the roof might make better sense than a \$70,000 appropriation at this time. Mr. Kasprzyk acknowledged that a CRF would make sense, but the roof needs to be repaired now. Mr. Eaton confirmed that the membrane repair cannot be done in segments, it must all be done at once. Ms. Nason suggested that the Board might want to consider a Warrant Article that would allocate some portion of any unrestricted fund balance at the end of the year be used to fund the Capital Reserve Fund designated for roof repairs. Mr. Mankus suggested that there are several professionals in town who might be able to make suggestions about the repairs that might be more economical than the current plan. Mr. Eaton & the Board invited Mr. Mankus and any other interested parties to inspect the roof.

Mr. Knight closed discussion of the warrant articles observing that the Committee still needs to see the default budget before it can vote on the warrant article. He went on to say that the Budget Committee will meet again on 1-6-10 at 6:00 PM at Paul School.

Ms. Kushner then made a power point presentation explaining the SAU budget. Mr. Knight reminded everyone that this is now a separate warrant article, but that Wakefield is not in a position to change any of the line items, just accept or reject the budget as a whole. The presentation covered the key responsibilities of the SAU, including an outline of all the various school based and business operations reports necessary each month for each town. She pointed out that the SAU added a position last year – an accountant for Grants. This new position is paid for out of the grant money, and has allowed the SAU to double the grants received in the past year. Mr. Miller wondered who audits the various student tuition reports to make sure that Wakefield is paying only for Wakefield students. Mr. Eaton & Mr. Reuning explained that while no one is actually hired to audit this process, it goes through so many layers of checks & balances, from the school to the SAU to the State that it's highly unlikely that an error in student allocation would occur. It was also noted that Wakefield has received 2x the grant money that Milton has because of it's "school in need" status. As the school works its way out of this status, with improved overall school results, the grant money will be reduced. And she took this opportunity to remind the Committee that grant money can be used only in accordance with the grant criteria; grant money cannot be used to reduce operating budget items. Ms. Kenney wondered why our school is in such need. Mr. Reuning explained that the school got into trouble because of the achievement gap between the general student population and the special ed students. Under the old system, special ed programs caused students to be pulled out of regular classes for special ed training. This meant that the student did not get whatever was being done in the original class. Missing English & math classes caused lower testing scores for these students & increased the gap. The new plans call for keep students in their regular classes and supplementing these classes with additional, special training.

Moving into the SAU budget itself, which is up app 2.5% over the adopted 09/10 budget, it was pointed out that the salary Approved column items represent a wage pool. While it is up over last year, depending on evaluations & hires, these additional funds may not be used, but need to be available. In order to keep the increase as minimal as possible, while covering the increases that cannot be avoided several steps were taken. The Superintendent & Special Ed Director have agreed to a salary freeze, monies available for conferences have been reduced, even though attendance at certain conferences are almost mandatory if you want to keep pace with changes taking place, the SAU auto lease is expiring and the car will be purchased at a minimal sum, travel line is down because of elimination of mileage charges, new software purchases are being limited to antivirus subscription, furniture purchases are being limited, except for some computers, purchases of new & replacement equipment is being eliminated.

In closure, Mr. Knight pointed out that all the Committee can do is recommend, or not, the SAU budget. It is not within the Committee purvue to change anything. The SAU budget is an aggregate vote between Milton & Wakefield. He suggested that the next meeting, scheduled for Jan 6, will cover (1) review previous meetings' minutes, (2) Continue review of the SAU budget, including its default budget & (3) continue warrant article review.

He also suggested that the Committee meet at 6:30 PM, at Town Hall to continue conversation of Town budget issues.

Mr. Miller made motion to adjourn. 2nd from Ms. Nason. There being no further discussion, the motion passes and Mr. Knight adjourned the meeting at 9:30 PM.

Respectively submitted by Deborah D. Gauthier, secretary