

Board of Selectmen

BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES

March 28, 2007

Present: Mark Finkelstein, Kathy Richards, Sharon Gibala, Scott Adamsons, Brian Flood, John Anderson

Absent: Susan Bransfield

Others: Rob Buden - Finance Director; Dr. Sally Doyen - Superintendent of Schools; Christopher Hetrick - BOE Chairman; Paul Bengston - BOE Maintenance, BOE members: Christopher Phelps, Rosemary Woitowitz, Mary Anne Rode; Jan Kitchnet-BOE staff

Deputy First Selectman Mark Finkelstein called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM. The purpose this meeting is to review the Board of Education budget.

Dr. Sally Doyen, Superintendent of Schools, thanked Jan Kitchnet for her work on the many details of the budget. Dr. Doyen reviewed a packet of information which gave an overview of the proposed Board of Education Budget.

- Health insurance premium increase will be 14.5% rather than the earlier estimated 2-%.
- New budget items for 07-08 include the following:

1. Brownstone Intermediate School: the return of World Language & Family and Consumer Science to the 6th grade curriculum (equipment and textbooks already in place)
2. Middle/High School:

a) Grade 7-12 Department Head in either Science or Social Studies. This is a stipend paid to an existing faculty member to improve communication between grades and to coordinate curriculum. The Math Department Head added in 06-07 has been a tremendous success.

b) Security Monitor position - hourly wage position with no benefits. This position is being requested due to the cut of 1.5 administrative positions. Its purpose is to provide an added presence to assist in monitoring hallways, bathrooms, school grounds.

c) Project Lead the Way - "Principals of Engineering" - addition of pre-engineering course that builds on curriculum already being offered. New facilities and technology at the Middle/High School complex make this opportunity possible. Equipment that enables students to design and produce products was obtained through a grant. Additional costs (\$24,000) are needed to pay for intensive training of teacher in summer residential program and materials.

d) Gateway to Technology at the 8th grade level

e) Addition of (2) AP courses at the high school level for a total of (4) AP courses available to high school students - cost per course is \$2500.00 (fees and materials).

f) Winter Indoor Track program - continuation of 06-07 pilot program in which 40-50 student participated.

3. District-wide initiatives:

a) Activity stipends for teacher advisory positions to clubs piloted in 06-07 (i.e. Chess Club, Drama Club, Pod Cast Club)

b) Classroom teacher for 4th grade

c) Board of Education contribution to Finance Director Salary and Financial Software

- Dr. Doyen noted that the district is aggressive in pursuing grants for enrichment programs. There are five proposals that have been submitted to the Gildersleeve Fund and she is optimistic that funding for 7th, 8th 9th grade programs will continue.

- With regard to staffing changes for 07-08, Dr. Doyen indicated that 2.5 certified positions will be eliminated. There will be a new approach to assigning teachers for special education services. Changes in Music and other certified positions will not affect student services. In addition, 3.5 non-certified positions (3 paraprofessional and .5 secretary) will be eliminated. There will be 27.5 paraprofessionals on staff district-wide and this will effectively service all students.

Discussion:

Scott Adamsons commented that he has heard very positive comments from residents concerning the direction of the Board of Education and the redirection of monies from administrative positions to direct student services.

Brian Flood asked about the addition of the 4th grade teaching position, because there was a 5th grade teacher added in 06-07. Dr. Doyen responded that in fact, the 5th grade teacher added last year will be moving to 6th grade for 07-08. Teachers are moved among grade levels as class size dictates.

Kathy Richards asked if the reduction of the .5 Music teacher will result in some students not being able to participate in music education. Dr. Doyen responded that for some students, general music and chorus will be combined, but that the overall effect of this reduction will not result in students not being able to access music if they wish to participate.

Sharon Gibala asked for clarification of security monitor position. Dr. Doyen responded that having this position will provide essential for monitoring hallways and grounds, especially at the start of the school day and dismissal time. It is the expectation that this position will also be available to monitor evening activities, monitor attendance and truancy issues, serving as a liaison with the local police. The position is six hours per day, 180 days per school year, and hourly wage with no benefits. The ideal candidate would have a law enforcement or security background.

Brian Flood asked for clarification of the grade 7-12 Department Head position and the difference between this and the position of Administrator for Curriculum and Technology. Dr. Doyen responded that the Department Head will have subject expertise and will be able to effectively address where curriculum can be adjusted in areas of weakness i.e. CAPT Test scores. Department Head would be responsible for tracking data year to year.

Paul Bengston addressed the question of whether or not a handicapped accessible van will be added to the capital request list. This vehicle will not be requested in 07-08. There are two vans currently in use for wheelchair transportation. When a new vehicle is needed, the state will require that the vehicle be a handicapped accessible mini-bus. Mr. Bengston also explained the extensive roof repairs needed at Brownstone Intermediate School and the costs associated with these repairs.

The number of students identified as needing special education services is decreasing for the upcoming year; however, the number of students with intensive needs will increase. The number of out placed students in expected to decrease, with these students re-entering the district.

Mark Finkelstein asked for clarification on the \$15,000 software allocation in the budget. Rob Buden confirmed that this amount is the Board of Education's contribution toward the new financial software being purchased by the Finance Department.

Mr. Hetrick recognized the Board of Education members present at the meeting: Chris Phelps, Rosemary Weitowitz, and Mary Anne Rode.

Ms. Weitowitz addressed the Board of Selectmen and told them that she is excited about the new programs being developed for Portland students. She feels that much effort has been put forth in creating this budget.

Mary Anne Rhode addressed the Board of Selectmen and told them that she feels Dr. Doyen has done a great job in creating this budget and providing the Board of Education members with the information they needed to make decision regarding the budget.

Chris Phelps address the Board of Selectmen and told them that he feels Dr. Doyen has done an excellent job of helping Portland schools achieve the educational goals of the district. She has work hard to improve the working relationship between the Board of Education and town government.

Mr. Hetrick explained to the Board of Selectmen that he has a lot of confidence in the budget as it is presented. He supports the addition of the security position. He emphasized that there were compromises made in the creation of this budget and that he has a lot of confidence in the budget as presented.

Sharon Richards asked what steps has the Board of Education taken to make the budget information more accessible to town residents? Mr. Hetrick responded that the budget is on the Town website and that budget workshops have been videotaped and are available for residents to view if they wish to. Improved working relationship between Board of Education and town government is also a positive step in getting information to the public.

With no further discussion, a motion was made by John Anderson, seconded by Sharon Richards to adjourn the meeting. The vote was unanimous, motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Siena
Board Clerk