

information on stipends or fringe benefits. He said he could not believe the phone bill for the school was almost as much as the rest of the Town of Falmouth. He had 2 pages of questions about the school budget. He was not trying to criticize the budget, but wanted explanations on some of the increases. He didn't like the transportation costs for people with special needs outside the Town of Falmouth. He thought that Beth Franklin's occupation as a real estate agent was a conflict of interest when she was voting. Jennifer Bush, of Maple Street, supported the budget. Trish Haffner, of Cornerstone Drive, also wanted to say she supported the budget. She thought that the children needed full day kindergarten. It was about what was best for her child. Josh Barrett, of Charlotte Drive, wanted to voice his support for the budget. He researched a survey done by Long-Range Planning about calling Falmouth home. He outlined the responses of those who filled out the survey. He felt the budget was an issue that deserved to be decided by the voters. Audrey Grassman, of Stonecrest Drive, wanted to thank the Council. She appreciated the information made available by the School and the Town. She wanted to speak about the process the School Board went through and how the process was made available for the public. She also wanted to commend the special education department for doing a great job. Carol Hazard, of Quaker Lane, said she was in favor of the budget. She was looking forward to the all day kindergarten. She thought the increase in the mil rate was fine. Mike Doyle, of Shady Lane, said the other people who spoke were sharing a lack of knowledge. He said that Falmouth paid, for their 10 best teachers, around \$500,000 more for their teachers than Cape Elizabeth did for their 10 best. He wondered if Falmouth had the best school system if Cape Elizabeth was outperforming them on SATs. He wanted the Council to vote down the budget and have it revised so all of the teachers could come down to the pay levels of Cape Elizabeth. Peter Goffin, of Lincoln Farms Road, wanted Falmouth to continue to strive for educational excellence. He thought that a lot of that was due to the teachers. Kathy Coster, of Waites Landing Road, wanted to reiterate what was already said. She supported the budget. She had faith in the leadership of the Town and the School. She said that she didn't believe that SATs were the end all.

Councilor Armitage said his only question related to part of the increase on taxes. He was wondering what was going towards that. His other concern was he had a hard time justifying paying for all day kindergarten.

Beth Franklin, Chair of the School Board, said one of the alternatives explored for kindergarten was an expansion of the Play and Learn program. Parents paid for the program. There were several people on the School Board that had a problem with charging for public school. It seemed philosophically wrong. Play and Learn was a day-care program, not educational.

Councilor Armitage thought it was his job to be the fiscal agent. He told the School Board he had a hard time increasing that part of the budget increase.

Chair Payne said that their job was to speak about the totality of the budget and give the School Board guidance on the overall financial impact of the tax payers.

Councilor Chase said Falmouth was spoiled because it was such a great town. He wished they could do more for the good teachers and get rid of the bad teachers. He quoted Governor Paige saying that Maine was broke and they can't pay the bills. He thought that they needed to tighten up. He asked the school committee to work harder and keep a flat line on the mil rate.

Councilor Varney was unhappy with parts of the budget. She felt a lot of people in Falmouth were struggling and a small tax increase would really hurt them.

Councilor Rodden said the budget made up for the loss of funding by the State, and all they were asking was for a new program that the Council had promised to people. She supported the budget.

Councilor Breen said it was her sixth and last time dealing with the budget. She thought it had gotten better over the years. She said that she supported the modest increase of the budget. She had faith in the community if the budget were put into the hands of the voter.

Councilor Pierce wanted to say that it's not her job to say how the taxpayers spend their money, but to make sure that the budget was fair for the taxpayers. She had no problem supporting the budget. She wanted to urge the public to ask via email if they had any other questions. She wanted to add that there was a Q and A section on the school budget for the gentleman that had specific questions for the Board.

Chair Payne wanted to ask the School Board what they foresaw happening in the next fiscal year, but recognized that no one can tell the future.

Analiese Larson said one thing they were preparing for was the loss of the Federal Jobs Grant bill that Congress passed in August. They set aside \$523,000 for 2012 that was funding 9 positions right then. That money will go away, and they will review that. They will start paying the principal payment on the elementary school. They were anticipating increased enrollment so that will help in the funding formula.

Chair Payne said his biggest concern was thinking of next year. There will not be any new found money, especially from the State and federally. He wanted the School Board to put that into context when considering the budget. He said they will need more support staff if the kindergarten was to be all day. He wanted to echo Councilor Chase's thought that the mil rate was hard to bring down.

Councilor Breen wanted to add that the mil rate had fluctuated and had gone down many times.

Chair Payne said that total tax burden tended to not go down, so that was a better way to express his point.

Councilor Pierce asked Nathan Poore to elaborate on the fluctuation of valuation rates from town to town.

Nathan Poore said where online the municipal budget was located, there was a table showing mil rates around Falmouth. It equalized the comparison based on each town's spot in evaluation. Falmouth was at 100% of fair market value. Of the 10 or 12, only Scarborough had a lower mil rate. Over the past 8 years the mil rate had gone down.

He also explained that they anticipated after public forum, the Council would have a public hearing on April 11. The Council needed to decide if they wanted to stay with that schedule. The rest of the steps included an April 25 meeting to review the School and Town budget, followed by a May 9 meeting to provide the statutory notice for the Budget Referendum Validation for the school department. There would then be a budget meeting May 16, along with the approval of the school and town budget. He said the Council could vote on the budget earlier than May 16 for the charter required vote, if they were ready.

He said he thought the Council needed to decide whether or not they wanted to continue talking to the School Board about some of the things discussed earlier in the meeting.

Councilor Pierce said they had been working with both finance committees, and she wanted to understand more clearly. She heard differing opinions from the public.

Analiase Larson said that she wanted to remind the Council that the budget had been approved. She said if they were asking them to reduce the budget, to understand that it may not come from all day kindergarten and to keep it to a figure.

Chair Payne asked Councilor Chase if he had a number he was looking for in the reduction of the school budget.

Councilor Chase said he didn't have an exact number, but wanted one that didn't increase the mil rate.

Chair Payne said that figure would be closer to \$1 million dollars.

Councilor Varney said that her number was closer to the 210. She wanted to see the Play and Learn program extended. She said half the day could be normal kindergarten and the other half would be the Play and Learn. She thought it would be a new way to deal with that issue. She wanted to point out that they will have to pay for the elementary school.

Chair Payne just wanted additional understanding of the cliff and what positions they would be at risk of and what the board's long-term strategic thinking would be.

Nathan Poore asked how they would like to proceed.

Chair Payne said he thought they were hearing more discussion on April 11th and a public discussion on the 25th. He wanted to echo a terrific job to all.

Adjourn

Councilor Pierce moved to adjourn; Councilor Breen seconded. The motion carried 7-0.

Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Planer

Recording Secretary