

AMENDED
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

March 29, 2008

Present: Chairman Elaine Kelly
Janice Hight
Dan McInnis
Lynne Winter

Absent: Vice Chairman Rick Nieber

Also Present: Assistant Town Administrator
Susan Sartori, School Committee
Charles Gobron, School Superintendent
Cheryl Levesque, Business Manager

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 8:08 a.m. in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

Charles provided an overview of the ARHS Budget. He reviewed the main budget drivers including: Health Insurance, Facility costs associated with the new building including utilities; achieving educational excellence including guidance counselors and administrative staff needs.

The Committee reviewed these budget drivers and discussed class sizes relative to the needs.

The Committee discussed the High School building project and use of a portion of the athletic fields to support on-going capital needs.

The Committee discussed a facility use policy and the philosophy of raising some revenues during off-hours to help off-set operational costs.

L. Winter raised the issue of school choice as a possible off-set to fixed costs. C. Gobron indicated it would require a full review so that all the implications are understood.

The Committee discussed the 25% retirement incentive benefit for Central Office Administration that was approved at the April 24, 2002 Regional School Committee meeting.

Ended ARHS review at 10:15 a.m.

Started Northborough K-8 School Budget Review.

C. Gobron discussed the enrollment figures relative to the various districts indicating the need to review the impacts of housing figures on the districts. He indicated that a study is underway to review the district configuration in order to maintain appropriate class sizes at the different schools.

C. Gobron reviewed the K-8 School Committee's goals for FY 09.

E. Kelly indicated that most line items have no increases because the collective bargaining agreements are under negotiation.

The Committee reviewed the substitute teachers' increase. C. Gobron indicated the rates had to be increased in order to attract appropriate staff, especially to cover for FMLA.

The Committee discussed the need and use of Technology Specialists' positions relative to the technology leases and existing teaching staff's capabilities. E. Kelly questioned if these positions are still needed given the technical experience of new teachers and the student body. C. Gobron indicated that they will review this during the next cycle.

E. Kelly questioned the need for Librarians in the Elementary Schools' media rooms. C. Gobron indicated that Librarians are key to curriculum support and play an important teaching role. Two Librarians actually serve as Head Teachers. E. Kelly suggested reviewing the position title to better reflect actual job duties to avoid confusion.

C. Gobron indicated that students attending Saint Bernadette School redirect some of Northborough's professional development grant funds. Under the law, C. Gobron indicated that at least \$25,000 minimum obligation is required by the State, but he feels that would fall very short of actual needs.

The Committee discussed the need for the \$316,000 override. C. Gobron indicated that the School Committee has not defined what will be in that override. It may get reduced.

E. Kelly requested that C. Gobron transmit to Appropriations the exact amount and what it consists of as soon as it is voted on by the School Committee. She requested that the detail include a clear explanation of the needs.

C. Gobron reviewed some of his recommendations which are still under review by the School Committee. These include a staff replacement, fee increases, and NEDP usage fee.

C. Gobron inciated he will recommend 2.5 FTE custodians be in the override at \$91,091 (2 positions are currently vacant); a Behavior Specialist position at the Melican Middle School; inclusion of a Facilitation position at \$57,875 (currently vacant); and \$47,874 for a Teaching position at Proctor, Lincoln or Zeh depending upon enrollment figures.

C. Gobron distributed two handouts – one with the 5.79% recommended increase, and the other with a Level Service FY 09 Budget at 4.55% increase.

C. Gobron thanked the Committee for their time. E. Kelly indicated that the Committee may ask them back when they get to the point of making their recommendations.

Lynne Winter moved to adjourn; J. Hight seconded; meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John W. Coderre

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