

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Saturday, February 28, 2009

9:00 a.m.

Present: Chairman Elaine Kelly
Janice Hight
Rick Nieber
Dan McInnis
Lynne Winter
Bob D'Amico

Also Present: Town Administrator John W. Coderre
School Superintendent Charles Gobron
Business Manager Cheryl Levesque

Visitors: Nancy Berglund, School Committee
Sean Carey, K-8 Schools Union President

Northborough K-8 Schools Budget:

- Superintendent reviewed the K-8 Schools FY10 budget. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes.
- Town Administrator presented information on Health Insurance costs for FY10. Approximately 70% of the Town's projected FY10 Health Insurance budget of \$4.6 million is attributed to the Northborough K-8 School employees.
- Discussed Legal Services budget and the potential need to review these service costs moving forward.
- Reviewed Central Office space and associated rent. Total rent is \$59,120; Northborough's share of the cost is \$23,648; Algonquin Regional High School's share is \$17,736. Concept is to move into Algonquin Regional High School once the audit for the High School is complete. No definitive timeframe exists for this move.
- Discussed administrative technology increases.
- Discussed raising fee for all-day kindergarten from \$2,000 to \$2,500 and enrollment implications. If enrollment decreases, then the School Department will reduce the number of teachers accordingly.
- Discussed the School Housing Committee's Study for possible re-districting options and grade configuration options as a means to mitigate class size impacts.
- Discussed the Overall Technology plan and staffing associated with it. The Appropriations Committee requested an updated copy of the Technology Plan. Superintendent indicated he will provide it.
- Discussed rental/leasing of musical instruments. Superintendent indicated that these are for the larger pieces of equipment. These are lease-to-own arrangements in order to have a full band.

- Discussed budget for nurse substitutes at \$95/day for 100-day estimate per year to cover 5 schools. Total budget \$9,500. Appropriations Committee questioned whether or not other coverage options could be devised to reduce substitute costs.
- Discussed potential increase in activity fee which is \$25 and will likely be increasing again in the future. 40 activities currently exist at K-8 schools, including math league, robotics, chess, etc. The one \$25 activity fee per student allows students access to all after-school activities.
- Discussed possible options for 3rd party billing for medically fragile SPED students. Superintendent indicated that they look into this on a case-by-case basis. Some circuit breaker funds off-set transportation costs associated with these SPED students. Superintendent indicated 14-17% of students are SPED. Total SPED budget is \$4,254,818 (increase of \$69,867 over FY09).
- Non-resident students: as part of a school policy that allows teachers in the district to enroll their children, Superintendent indicated he estimates 5-8 students in K-8 fall into this category. These are only allowed if there is room.
- Reviewed enrollment figures for K-8 schools totaling 1,889 students.
- Some changes in % increases are related to new accounting requirements related to how costs are shown. Example is how Superintendent, Assistant and Director of Technology are shown.
- Discussed various accounts, including advertising costs (of \$10,000) for filling positions; head teacher stipends that fill in for principals during absences; Library/Media salary increase of 6.71%; reviewed step increase process allowed until reach max of grade in 12 years. Once maxed only receive cost of living increase.
- Discussed cost of approximately \$1 million primarily for SPED aids related to IED's. 4 aids are being reduced in the FY10 proposed budgets. Total \$17,720,269 K-8 proposed budget represents an increase of \$432,334 over FY09, or 2.50% increase.

End of K-8 School budget discussion - 12:15 p.m.

K-8 CIP:

- The Superintendent presented an overview of the K-8 Capital Improvement Plan FY10 – FY17.
- Reviewed Lincoln Street Feasibility Study for \$500,000. Superintendent is trying to get a meeting with MSBA, but has not been able to get one. There is a possibility that this Capital Project may be deferred until FY11, but the School Committee has not voted to defer it. Elaine Kelly indicated that funding for MSBA is drying up since it is based upon 1% of the sales tax. The Town continues to wait for MSBA approval of the Statement of Interest.
- Discussed proposed integrated telecommunications system (phone, bells, intercom) per the CIP. Superintendent indicated that the phone system is needed for safety purposes. This is a top priority for Capital Plan this year.
- Discussed window blinds at Lincoln Street School and Peaslee School. \$19,500 at each location for a total of \$39,000. This project is being reviewed further.

Lunch break – 1:10 – 1:30 p.m.

ARHS Budget review – started at 1:30 p.m.

- Discussed ARHS FY10 assessment and the impact of the wealth-based formula. Northborough's assessment is going up 1.1% and Southborough's assessment is going up 10.22%.
- ARHS adopted a budget of \$17,408,581 for FY10, which is a total increase of 1.63% or \$278,583.
- Committee discussed the wealth-based assessment and expressed concern over remarks made by Southborough representatives. The Algonquin Regional High School assessments should revert back to the Regional Agreement and no longer follow the statutory default method agreed upon since FY08.
- If option 2 is used, it would mean approximately a \$203,000 increase for FY10 for Northborough.
- Elaine Kelly expressed concern about what Southborough's action could have, if they put forward a budget not in line with the statutory method. It could require a Regional Town Meeting to settle the budget. If no agreement is reached, \$278,000 would need to be cut from the Regional budget if no budget gets resolved and we would revert back to 1/12th prior year's budget.
- 70 % of all Regional School Districts use the statutory method.
- Regional School Committee voted 8-1 to approve the budget and the assessment, but that was prior to Southborough Advisory Board voting not to approve the budget.
- Discussed regional transportation bussing expenses.
- Janice Hight had to leave the meeting at 3:00 p.m.
- Discussed issue of Central Office Health Insurance cost disproportionately charged to Northborough. Superintendent indicated that he would be willing to re-look at how to more fairly distribute these costs to the three districts.

3:20 p.m. – Lynne Winter moved to adjourn; Rick Nieber seconded; all members voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

John W. Coderre