

Andover School Committee
Minutes of Thursday, April 22, 2010
School Administration Building - School Committee Room

Members in Attendance: Chairman Dennis Forgue, Annie Gilbert-Secretary, Richard Collins, Paula Colby-Clements, and David Birnbach

Others in Attendance: Dr. Claudia Bach, and Interim Business Manager Bernie Tuttle

I. Call to Order

Chairman Dennis Forgue opened the meeting at 6:03 P.M. in the School Committee Room. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the School Department Budget for FY-2011.

II. The Budget

Mr. Forge reported that the Preliminary Budget originally presented at the start of the budget season was \$63,725,451. Through a variety of adjustments, the School Committee voted a budget number of \$63,779,211 on March 16, 2010. Mr. Forgue distributed a hand-out of further budget reductions to reach an estimated budget number of \$63,670,529 as of April 13th. The hand-out also lists a series of offsets to the estimated budget of April 13th lowering the recommended School Budget for FY-2011 to \$61,888,421. Should the Committee agree to this number, the Town budget will be balanced prior to Town Meeting; otherwise the School Committee can continue to negotiate and go to Town Meeting with a separate budget number.

A review of the offsets include \$700,000 in ARRA (Stimulus) funds, \$700,000 in staff reductions (12 FTE Teachers) realized by increasing class size at the elementary level and increasing class size at the high school, removal of the 5% tuition increase of \$331,000 for Out-of-District Special Education Tuition, and the reduction of one High School Guidance position for \$51,108. The offsets provides for the new number of \$61,888.421. Mr. Forgue reported that the other Committees support this number.

Mr. Collins is uncomfortable with reducing the teaching staff and the impact it will have on the school programs district-wide. Mr. Forgue said no one is happy about this, but the AEA has not stepped up in any way whatsoever. There are a variety of options they could agree to as a whole without losing teachers. David Birnbach pointed out that \$700,000 is roughly the three day furlough teachers could agree to.

Annie Gilbert noted that the guidance position is a new item on the table and requests that should there be a better option to get to the necessary budget number, she would be open to those changes. The loss of a guidance position would really hurt the caseload of the other guidance counselors which is so important at the high school level. The Committee feels they could find other areas to realize this savings within the budget without the reduction of a guidance counselor at AHS and at the

suggestion of Cindy Weber, Gavin Circle they agreed to change the item description to "Other" in the amount of \$51,108.

Dennis Forgue reported that the Special Education Out-of-District numbers will be tracked monthly and closely watched.

Dr. Bach is horrified by the proposal presented. She wants to know why everyone has settled on the Town Manager's recommendation which divides the funds differently with the schools getting less of the pie. There are serious issues with increasing the classroom size at the high school. The high school is going into a self-study with NEASC next year and the rooms will not meet their requirements, it goes against the School Committee class size policy, and the one value all administrators across the district hold dearly and have asked that be kept – lower class size. It is in the School Committee's hands to enter into negotiations with the AEA, and if they don't agree to take furlough days, the School Committee should take unilateral action rather than making the cuts presented. She is disappointed the choices made were not discussed with her or the schoolhouse leaders, and were made over vacation when few were around.

Bob Willard, Tewksbury Street asked if we are taking on more risk by removing the 5% tuition increase in out-of-district special education tuition. Diane Costagliola, Belknap Drive worries about the feasibility of having 35 students in a classroom at Andover High and she is frustrated with the AEA for not coming forward. Town residents have clearly indicated that their number one priority for coming to Andover to live is the schools.

Bonnie Zahourik, Granli Lane stressed that the message communicated at Town Meeting is very important. We need to be clear about the risks being taken with accreditation by raising class size. The School Department has done a great job building in-district special education programs that are enormously successful; they keep students in district, and provide the best educational opportunity for kids.

Motion

On a motion by Annie Gilbert, with a second by David Birnbach, the School Committee unanimously voted to approve \$61,888,421 as the School Budget for FY-2010.

The School Committee ended the Regular Session at 6:48 P.M. to reconvene at 7:00 PM at the Tri-Board Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Dee DeLorenzo, Recorder

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