

Andover School Committee
Minutes of Regular Meeting of February 9, 2009
School Administration Building - School Committee Room

Members in Attendance: Chair Debra Rahmin Silberstein, Tony James, Secretary, Arthur H. Barber, Ed.D, Richard J. Collins

Others in Attendance: Dr. Claudia L. Bach, Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and David Keniston, Business Manager.

II. Regular meeting in the School Committee Room

A. Salute to the Flag

Chair Deb Silberstein called the School Committee Meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. Mr. Collins led the meeting in a moment of silence and Peter Anderson let the meeting in a salute to the flag.

B. Finances

1. FY2010 Superintendent's Preliminary Budget

Dr. Bach said this year's budget has been a particularly difficult one and even more difficult to present this evening. The FY2010 Budget totals \$60,433,157; Personnel \$47.3M and Operating Expenses \$13.1M. The budget is one million more than the previous fiscal year budget. The budget presents a major shortfall for the School Department and we will not be able to sustain current services and programs, major reductions will have to be made. An additional \$3.2M is needed to bring forth current programs. Meetings have been held with school and town administrators, all staff, the AEA leadership, and School Committee members to gather as much input from all groups as possible. Student needs come first and reductions must be made as far away from the classroom as possible.

Recommendations for system level reductions will include elimination of the contingency positions, shutting down all schools in the evening during the winter months (except Andover High), school year calendar changes, increase in Full Day Kindergarten and Pre-school tuitions, and increases in all fees. Left with a remaining shortfall of \$2,437,000, additional reductions will be made system wide. Andover High School will incur a 21% reduction or \$528,000; the middle schools 22% or \$530,000; elementary schools 25% or \$608,000 and Central Office will incur a reduction of 32% or \$771,000. The impact of these reductions will result in the High School maintaining as much of their academic programs as possible with an increase in class size, and a decrease in the number of sections offered. The Middle School teams will remain intact with a reduction in media services and special offerings. At the elementary level class size will be kept at the current level and reductions realized in specialist programs. An estimated fifty-five positions will be cut.

The Federal Government reimburses us only 7% of the cost of the Special Education mandated programs. Out of District Tuition has continued to increase and the School Transportation Budget for Regular and Special Education are almost equal in cost. Currently we have 50 students enrolled in our six In-District Program for next year. The In-District Program is better educationally and socially for students and fiscally prudent for the district. There is an increase in staffing for the In-District Program, but note the savings realized by providing In-house programs for our Special Education students saves us money.

Our challenge is how to meet the shortfall in the budget and adequately provide curriculum. We cannot lose the important curriculum initiatives developed and implemented across the district. As we proceed with this budget we will be looking for other revenue options such as; wage freezes, furloughs, additional sources of income (grants, gifts and donations), partnerships with other districts, the Vocational School and GLEC, and in addition combining services with the town. These initiatives will take time to materialize and savings will not be quickly realized.

Discussion:

Shawsheen Principal Moira O'Brien said the budget forecast is very disheartening; and the Principal of High Plain Elementary, Brenda O'Brien said the school system never recovered from the losses of 2003-2004 and this deficit is more dramatic.

Mr. Collins said the Special Education mandates put an enormous strain on the budget. Tony James said Federal and State Laws are there to protect the Special Education students and hopefully we will receive additional revenue from the Federal Government through the IDEA Funds. Art Barber thanked the Administrators, Principals, and Staff for their hard work and input in assembling this year's budget. Deb Silberstein said we are looking at changing the landscape, this is not a one year issue.

Dennis Forgue attended the Board of Selectmen's Meeting earlier tonight and said the Board of Selectmen would like to discuss some concerns they have about rescheduling Town Meeting at the beginning of tonight's Tri-board meeting. The Town Technology Task Force presented a summary of their findings and is ready to move forward and to meet with Ray Tode.

The School Committee took a five minute break at 6:58 PM prior to the beginning of the Tri-board Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Dec DeLorenzo, Recorder