

Andover School Committee
Regular Meeting of March 4, 2013
School Administration Building - School Committee Room

Members in Attendance: Chairwoman Paula Colby-Clements, Vice-Chair Dennis Forgue, Annie Gilbert, Richard Collins, and David Birnbach

Others in Attendance: Dr. Marinel McGrath, Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent Nancy Duclos, and Assistant Superintendent Paul Szymanski

I. Regular Meeting

A. Call to Order

Chairwoman Colby-Clements opened the Regular Meeting of the School Committee at 7:00 P.M. Mr. Collins asked for a moment of silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. New Business: FY14 Budget Presentation

Superintendent Dr. McGrath recognized her Leadership Team, the Budget Sub-Committee (Dennis, Paula and David), the Business Office especially Paul Szymanski, our staff school accountant, Janet Wright, Kathy Gilmore, Doreen Bille and Mary Robinson with their guidance in helping create the FY14 budget. She stressed they worked as a team, challenge themselves, control costs without resources and came up with these results. The budget includes FY13 appropriations and current positions, plus creates space for some positions needed such as an Asst. Principals at the elementary schools level which supports enrollment and the Strategic Plan, plus the statutory regulations and mandates.

Dr. McGrath then took the time to go over the presentations slide-by-slide highlighting that there were no cuts to programs or services, user fees for choral program are funded in budget; 3.4% reduction in expenses over FY13 achieved through sustainable changes, contracts negotiations. New In-District programs, “transitions-phase 1-high school” are also included to provide programming for emotionally vulnerable students. There is a \$30 increase in athletic user fees to provide for JV girls’ ice hockey if a minimum of 16 students participate for Title IX compliance. There is a 6.7% increase over last year’s budget totaling \$70,278,272 – of which \$57,394,709 are salaries and 12,883,563 are expenses.

The FY14 is a level service budget meaning that the money is for the district to be in compliance, plus fund the Strategic Plan investments and may run higher from time to time because students come and go throughout the year, plus programs are carried forward from one year to the next.

At the Elementary Schools level, there is a need for SPED teachers and Assistants FTEs and Social Workers FTEs to be in compliance, plus teachers at the kindergarten and grade 3 level for enrollment purposes.

At the Middle Schools, again there is a need for SPED and Assistant FTEs because of the caseload and in district plus education team facilitators due to reorganization. At the High School level, there is a need for a Nurse, plus the SPED and Assistant FTEs for compliance.

At the District level, new programs for emotionally vulnerable students – which is Phase I at the high school and ESL teachers and coordinators.

The transitions program at the Phase I level for grades 9-12 is a new program for the emotionally

vulnerable students who have a primary and secondary diagnosis of anxiety, depression or other serious emotional disability need for students in grades 7-12. These students despite medical and outside therapeutic interventions are still unable to attend school or meet the demands of the challenging curriculum. Phase I will provide a supportive safe therapeutic environment for students to return from a hospitalization or to avoid one. An IA and LICSW will provide additional support to the SPED teacher and the hope is for the student to gradually return to the general ed setting.

The FY14 Strategic Plan Investments equal 13.05 FTES in the following:

Elementary Schools – Digital Learning Specialists, PK Music and Assistant Principals; Middle Schools add band and chorus teachers and at the high school a need to reduce the class size per the Strategic Plan and NEASC recommendations. At the District level, there is a K-12 Fine Arts Program Advisor, PT 6-12 Program Advisors in Social Studies and English Lang Arts, plus a Fine Arts Teacher – all per the Strategic Plan and NEASC requests.

The School Committee hopes to present the budget and discussion at the Public Hearing to be held later in March, with a final vote on the budget number in April.

Discussions/Questions

Paula Colby-Clements thanked everyone for all their hard work on putting this budget presentation together realizing it is a difficult and long task but in the end coming up with the best solutions. David Birnbach commented that he felt the presentation was very clear, pragmatic and concise.

Dennis Fogue asked the question on how many other high schools were also participating in Ed X which Dr. McGrath responded that 3 other districts were looking at it, but that Andover was the first district to participate in this program. He also commented on the district savings from having GLEC positions transferred into the APS budget, which Dr. McGrath summarized that there were nine positions transferred into the district with a bottom line total costs savings of \$196,546 after health care costs deductions. He also asked about new mandates which Dr. McGrath provided details on such as on the new implementation for concussions which was an increase costs for the trainers, on July 1st any general education student who is suspended or expelled will have their education paid by the District while they are out of school. Other mandates coming up with impacted costs are gender identity issues and educator evaluations systems which the District needs to provide extensive amounts of training – all of which is coming out of the District staff development budget since we are not a “race to the top” district.

David Birnbach commented on the expense reduction line item which is 3.8% and noted that there must have took a lot of creativity, hardwork and choices to get to this point. He thanked the Leadership Team for making that all happen. Dennis Fogue also stated that the School Committee had increased the class size at the high school a few years ago, when he was chairman, in an attempt to bring the budget in line, but now they were hoping to reverse that trend.

Annie Gilbert also said that she appreciated the Leadership team efforts in what she saw tonight, the reorganizational piece was huge. There was a clear investment in fine arts, and she looks forward to that discussion when they have a community meeting to talk about the Strategic Plan. She stated that it seems our district wants to educate the children as a whole and that this was the beginning piece of

the Strategic Plan. The investments made through the years in our in-district SPED programs which are phenomenal, but always under scrutiny yet it is an important and investment cost savings in keeping our students in district. She wants to clarify the FTEs so that we can build capacity in our district and keep the students here, including the social workers and different pieces along the way, because it benefits a large population of our students. Level services was also well explained and defined in this budget and what that means – because all children have needs which when they move up to another level, these services must also be replicated in the new level.

Dennis lastly commented on the new developments impacting our school districts which is good for Andover on the whole, but does bring challenges to the budget. Annie Gilbert stated that Andover was in the Boston Magazine and highlighted as a community to live in.

Paula Colby Clements then summarized what would happen now. She stated that this was the first presentation of the school budget number. That the School Committee had made a conscious decision to continue the leadership team work on the budget before rolling out the number tonight. She said that they really wanted to know what investments were being made, which items were going to be sustainable, what available revenues would be there so that they weren't going to invest in something that could not be kept. She also continued to state that she invited the other boards to look at the whole budget process together. The School Committee wanted to really understand the budget, to know that they were doing the best they could with controlling costs and making the best budget assumptions possible for the District. So for the first time, the boards came together and began this process to develop a plan and build a consensus among the boards. From here on, the boards would form subcommittees and continue to work together up to Town Meeting and beyond Town Meeting to continue their work.

Dr. McGrath concluded by thanking the School Committee as a whole and individually because they each helped with clarifying the terms of the budget. In terms of their level of understanding, she stated that they all understood their own obligation and were very knowledgeable about the budget. They provided emotional support as well as good questions and critique about the process. She praised them for being “good partners” and know that the budget they all collaborated on is preparing the children of the District for their own future.

C. Consent Agenda

1. Minutes: SC Meeting of Feb. 7, 2013 - no changes to minutes
2. Warrants - Paul Szymanski reported the Warrants to be in order.

On a motion by Dennis Forgue with a second by Annie Gilbert, the SC voted 5-0 to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

H. Adjournment

At 8:22 P.M. on a motion by Dick Collins and seconded by Annie Gilbert, the Andover School Committee voted 5-0 to adjourn the School Committee Meeting of March 4, 2013.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Phelan

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Recorder