

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
April 8, 2009  
Work Session – School Operating Budget

Present: Frank Hyde, Raymond Spear, Glen Shibley, Laura Flanagan

Interim Town Manager Paul Sprague

Absent: Kenneth Cloutier

Vice-President Spear explained the financial situation facing the town for the upcoming fiscal year along with the discovery that there is a need to find \$5.5 million. The Town Council wants no increase in taxes. If the schools are level funded, would still need a 6% increase in the tax levy. He urged everyone to pull together for FY 2010.

Superintendent Ken DiPietro summarized his proposed budget request.

(See entire budget proposal in Town Council folder)

Mr. DiPietro proposed a request for the schools of \$1,975,084 in addition to last year's allocation, bringing the total to \$64,870,966. The schools remain S3050 compliant with this request; \$1,975,084 represents a 3% increase. The state is putting the burden on the local taxpayer.

Superintendent DiPietro also noted that \$1,955,242 represents an increase in salaries; \$57,000 in gas, oil and heat.

In addition, Mr. DiPietro reviewed enrollment projections and reductions in teaching staff, noted a reduction of \$350,000 in the loss of tax sheltered annuities (403b) and steps that were frozen in 2006. Mr. DiPietro further explained how the School Department reached the proposed number of \$1,975,084.

A few different options were mentioned, including opening the teacher's contract for negotiations and/or changing some services.

Ms. Flanagan commented we can't take from the town and give you what you are asking. If this all had to come from the town side, it would cripple us.

Vice-President Spear suggested that Mr. DiPietro talk to Finance Director Warren West to get a handle on this. The council needs to try to get to no tax increase at all.

Mr. Shibley – If you level fund, it would also affect pension, benefits, etc. If you take level funding and then reduce 5% more, you save over \$2.1 million. We are asking for no tax increase and we have asked the municipal side for a 10% cut along with no raises for municipal or police.

Mr. DiPietro explained that the teachers' contract ends in August 2010. Would be a major undertaking before May to try to re-open the contract and would mean some type of negotiation with the union. I fear that there isn't enough time. Cuts this large would also affect programs.

Kathy Patnaude, School Committee and Thomas Heatherman, School Committee, both felt there may not be enough time to re-open contract. Would be advantageous to wait until expiration of contract next year and have enough time to renegotiate and not rush into something.

Suggested that Mr. DiPietro meet with Mr. West to go over figures.

Motion made by Frank Hyde seconded by Laura Flanagan to adjourn meeting. All voted aye.

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Town Clerk