

School Committee Newsletter

THINK SPRING ! March,

Community Budget Impact and the Budget Process

by Andrea Jones

It is that time again. That brief and intense period where we focus almost exclusively on next year's budget. In February the Mayor requested in her capacity as Chair of the School Committee, that the School Committee direct the Superintendent to prepare a level services budget for the 2005-2006 school year, to fund school programs and services as they are in the current 2004-2005 budget. This was great news for those of us who were here for last year's level funded budget request and even better for those who have sat on this committee through three years of substantial service cuts and rising fees. We are, however, hearing that a level services budget will not be fully funded, so again and as always the School Committee requests your personal involvement. As parents and guardians, your input to us and your understanding of the budget and potential constraints is invaluable. The Superintendent will present her level services budget at the regularly scheduled School Committee meeting on Monday evening, March 21. Please note

that budget workshops have been scheduled for Tuesday, March 22, 6 - 9 PM, Saturday, April 2, 8 - 11 AM, and Tuesday, April 5, 6:30 - 9:30 PM. Your attendance at any and all of these meetings, as well as the regularly scheduled School Committee meetings is strongly encouraged. Comments and feedback from attendees will be solicited.

There will be a joint budget workshop with the City Council on Tuesday evening, April 12. Subsequent to this meeting the School Committee will vote the budget, Tuesday, April 26, and request that the Mayor forward the budget to the City Council for approval. Please note that after the budget has been presented, and the Mayor has received it, she can add to it or cut it. When the budget goes to the City Council, that group can either maintain, or reduce the budget.

You will find a budget impact timeline on the last page of this newsletter. This schedule lists the names and potentially the most effective times to communicate with elected public Officials on budget issues. The School Committee

looks forward to your thoughts, comments, and input on the upcoming budget. See you soon!

Administrative Openings

The recent search for a principal for Bresnahan School was completed on Feb. 11 when the Superintendent announced her appointment of Kristina Davis as principal. The search took place over a two month period and involved a considerable number of members of the Bresnahan School community. Candidates were interviewed by the Search Committee, had references checked, were visited at their places of employment, and visited Newburyport, and the Bresnahan School to meet with several groups. They were also interviewed by the Superintendent and participated in a public interview. Kristina was the unanimous choice of the Search Committee. She comes to the position having served as interim principal during this year and previously having served as Director of Curriculum as well as other roles in the School District. The appointment leaves the

Administrative Openings

position of Director of Curriculum open for the coming year. Additionally, with the recent resignation of David Magee, Special Education Director, effective July 1, that position also will be open. The Superintendent has formed Search Committees for both positions, and the processes are underway. If you are interested in the related activities and timelines, they can be viewed on the district's web site www.newburyport.k12.ma.us Search Committee members are: **Curriculum Director** - Teachers, Alden Metz, Nancy Duclos, Cathy Hill, and Kristina Shairs, NHS Principal, Jim Lee, Parents, Mindy Longpre and Pam Kipp, Community member, Zach Longley and Administrative Asst. Cathy Manning. **SPED Director** - Teachers, Ann Langlois, Maureen Farren, Nicki Staszewski, Parents, Jennifer Zolnay, Judith Bliss Welch, and Steve Kapp, and Administrative Asst. Dawn Clay. The Superintendent expects to complete the search processes and hiring by April 25. The new Directors will begin working in Newburyport on July 1, 2005.

Overview of FY '05 and an Outlook for FY '06 - Revenue from Circuit Breaker and Fees by Steven Cole

As efforts towards developing the FY '06 budget for the Newburyport Public Schools continue, there are a couple of fund sources that added revenues to last year's budget, whose impact this year could be quite variable. Those fund sources are reimbursement of the Special Education Circuit Breaker account (Circuit Breaker) and fees. Circuit Breaker reimburses public schools for a percentage of extraordinary costs incurred for special education students. Students receive services either in-district or out-of-district. When the costs of these services are over four times the foundation budget for per pupil cost, these services are reimbursable via Circuit Breaker. However, this reimbursement is not like purchasing cold cuts or meat, at the local deli. There is a process whereby unit costs for the service are established and accounted for. And there are allowable costs for each of these services. The Newburyport Public Schools has managed out of district costs very well, and will likely be challenged to do so even more, if allowable costs continue to be reduced. The law requires a Circuit Breaker reimbursement at a 75% level. The legislature has not funded at

this level. However, there is indication that they may reach this funding this year. It's time to simply advocate and lobby the legislature for more dollars for Circuit Breaker. In terms of general revenue from fees, those fees include: athletic fees and receipts, transportation fees and student activity fees. While all of these fees should be explored, the results of last year's initial effort with transportation fees are being reviewed. A new transportation bid has been offered for next year's transportation contract. A review of transportation fees will be essential this year, once the contract is awarded. In terms of athletic fees and receipts, comparison figures will soon be available to see how budgeted revenues have compared with actual receipts. While our maximum per family cost of athletic fees is \$800, that compares favorably with maximum costs of other school districts such as Masconomet Regional High School, which is \$1200 maximum per family. Finally, are the student activity fees. These result from charging \$50 for student activities, of which \$25 are class dues (i.e. "Class of 2005" to support class activities.) The other \$25 has been used to fund extracurricular activities. Preliminary figures of student activity fees, and a roster of extra curricular costs thus far will be presented for discussion at upcoming budget workshops, and will certainly be discussed.

2005 School Committee

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NEXT ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER - *A Review of State and Federal Issues Affecting the Budget, Impact of Changes in Regulations and Regulatory Issues, and follow-up on the FY '06 Budget*
LIST SERVE-*Those who wish to subscribe to the list serve can go to this link: forum-join@list.newburyport.k12.ma.us*

