

School Committee Newsletter

January, 2006

School Capital Plan—Update

Our schools have benefited from the initial implementation of plans for capital improvements. A Five Year Capital Plan that is annually reviewed and approved by the School Committee was funded by the City Council for the 2005-06 school year.

Many projects were completed over the summer when things are quiet in the schools. The Bresnahan Elementary School saw improvements including lighting upgrades, the 1st and 2nd grade corridor renovations, sanding and refinishing of the gym floor and renovations to the ceiling. The Nock Middle School also had lighting upgrades completed as well as accessibility upgrades. In addition, some HVAC units were replaced at the Nock.

Other projects approved in this plan are scheduled for the future and include accessibility upgrades at Bresnahan and Brown Elementary Schools, new stage curtains and, less visible, upgrades to the electric panels at Bresnahan, replacement of exterior doors and bathroom renovations at the Brown, and assembly spaces and bathroom upgrades at the Nock Middle School.

The Bradley Fuller Field is due to have some extensive work done but scheduling remains to be determined. You will notice as well that the city has installed new signage along Low Street next to the playing fields which seems to have successfully addressed a recurring problem with visitors to this field parking along the street.

Please keep an eye on your schools and be sure to notice these many improvements.

Long Term Elementary Building Needs (LTEBN)

First, the presentation on the LTEBN latest report to clarify figures, has been re-scheduled from January 18, to January 26, 2006. The presentation will occur at the Nock Middle School Library, beginning at 7 P.M. Your attendance is most welcome, and essential to the critically important task of preparing a proposal for expanding Newburyport's elementary school facilities.

Additionally, on Tuesday, January 17, during the Business Meeting, the School Committee voted to approve the inclusion of LTEBN as a standing item on the meeting agenda. Look for more opportunity to become involved with LTEBN through the formation of an ad-hoc committee. Details of the structure and function of this committee will soon become available. This ad-hoc committee will work with the School Committee in an effort to produce a proposal that is well understood and supported by the Newburyport community. This effort will require significant community interface to include: listening to and gathering concerns, and communicating key information, results and progress. Of course LTEBN as a standing agenda item during School Committee meetings will help with this .

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING TIME TO CHANGE BEGINNING IN FEBRUARY - working and business meetings will begin at 7:00 P.M. Conversation with the public, in advance of the business meeting will start at 6:30 P.M.

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School Committee's FY07 Budget Process and Calendar

The School Committee's FY07 Budget Process and Calendar is well underway. This year's process began with the Brainstorming meeting that took place on September 28. It was well attended and numerous ideas were generated. The School Committee has examined these prior to generating their FY07 budget priorities and identified actions for many of these ideas. A list of the ideas with notes from the Committee's review can be found on the school system web site

(http://www.newburyport.k12.ma.us/bud_07/index.htm)

Below is a list of recent and forthcoming budget activities. The School Committee encourages you to attend as many of our budget meetings as possible. Your input is critical to producing a budget that provides the best education for Newburyport's students.

The *Superintendent and district administrators began a review of*

projected enrollments and staffing needs for the next school year. They will also review projected costs associated with school facilities', staffing and operations.

- At the beginning of February the School Committee provides the Superintendent with budget parameters. The *Superintendent is asked to develop the school system's budget with consideration given to the budget priorities of the School Committee and School Councils, while addressing federal, state and local legal, regulatory and contractual obligations.*

- *The Superintendent presents the budget to the School Committee on March 20.*

- *Between March 20 and April 25, the School Committee holds a series of budget workshops to review the budget by site and by line item.*

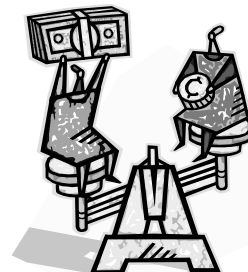
Dates for the Budget Workshops will be published in the February newsletter and will be available on the district website.

- *A somewhat revised budget format will be used for this year's budget as a result of a review and input by several school community members: Maura Perkins, Patty Spalding, Kathy Flaherty, Donna Holaday, Bill Heenehan, Mike O'Connor, Mark Wright, and Mayor Mary Anne Clancy.* The new format will provide more comparative data as well as some detail to accompany budget figures for line items by site.

- The Superintendent and some School Committee members attended school PTO meetings to share this information and respond to questions. The *School Committee is pleased to meet with any groups interested in hearing more about the school system budget process.*

Budget Calendar

- January**
 - Enrollment and staffing projections presented to School Committee
 - Site-based budget discussions with teachers and with School Councils
 - Principals receive budget requests from faculty and staff
- February**
 - School committee identifies FY07 budget parameters for Superintendent based on state and city funding information
 - School Improvement Plans and site-based budget priorities presented to School Committee
 - Principals submit budgets to Superintendent, based on site-based and School Committee budget priorities
- March**
 - Superintendent prepares district-wide budget based on budget parameters provided by the School Committee and in consideration of the Committee's and the site-based budget priorities
 - Superintendent presents FY07 Budget to School Committee
 - School Committee holds Budget Workshops
- April**
 - School Committee and City Council have joint Budget Workshop
 - Public Hearing on Budget and final adoption of Budget by School Committee
 - Budget forwarded to Mayor
- May**
 - Mayor presents budget to City Council
- June**
 - City Council budget hearings



An Interview with Mayor Moak on Newburyport Public Schools, January 12, 2006

1. *How will you demonstrate and reinforce the City's commitment to funding the Newburyport Public Schools such that the schools can aspire to excellence?*

The City's commitment to funding education has always been above requirements – one of the reasons why our funding from the State is lower than surrounding communities. We have continued this funding level through local appropriation. The decrease in State aid and the limitations of Proposition 2½ have burdened our ability to maintain a level we would like, but I do believe even with these financial burdens we continue to strive for excellence by attempting to maintain the highest level of academic commitment to the programs we offer.

2. *How do you propose advocating for additional dollars from the state and federal government for Newburyport schools? What are your thoughts on ways to influence legislators in favor of education money for Newburyport?*

The School Committee, parents, and educators as a group must continue coalition efforts. My personal attempts will be to ascertain what urban areas are striving for by looking closely at their efforts to identify areas that also apply to Newburyport. For example, politicians in urban areas may look at population density as a criteria to allow favorable flow of general state aid – not just education-related.

3. *If changes in education funding at the state level do not improve the financial situation for Newburyport schools (increased revenues), do you expect the community to need Proposition 2½ operational override in lieu of additional reductions to existing services and programs in our schools?*

I am not prepared to answer that question until I thoroughly review this year's budget requests and actual appropriations.

4. *Now that you are more familiar with the financial details of the school budget and with the process taken by the Administrative Council in developing the school budget, are there any changes you propose to improve its' development?*

I am not yet thoroughly familiar with the financial details of the school budget. That will take at least the initial budget process. I want to see how we react to the preparation of the budget by the Administration in the format that has been proposed. Need for changes are usually not apparent and accurate until you have had the opportunity to analyze the data presented in its' present format. As my architect-acquaintance says "It is easier to critique than create."



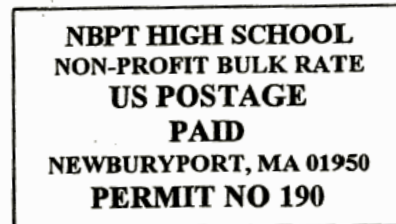
5. *Given the imminent community process in addressing the long term elementary building needs, and the likely length of time before capacity additions can be made, what do you plan to do about Kelley School's capital needs? Should the community put money into the building at this time?*

All capital needs will be thoroughly scrutinized this coming year. Our Capital Plan is not actually a Plan, but a Wish List – enactment of the list entails having available funds or borrowing capacity. Presently our debt service is increasing; our bonding costs are out distancing retirement of debt. Most capital expenditures will need to be delayed as we designate funds for maintenance and repair.

I cannot give a thorough answer on this issue until we complete a full analysis of the elementary needs which needs to be done this calendar year.

6. *What are your expectations for the outcome of the LTEBN plan? Do you think we will need a West End school? My emphasis on the long term building plan is to determine and prioritize needs, then set our budget limits and re-examine our needs. We need to work within our budgeting limitations – we cannot design without cost parameters. I believe schools should be of similar size and facility offerings. With that goal in mind, I think the only way to reach that goal is by building an elementary school in the West End.*

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School Committee Directory

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**In the next Newsletter expected to be released just after Feb. 28, 2006:
School Budget FY '07**