

**NEWBURYPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING
Tuesday, April 28, 2015**

**Newburyport High School
Meeting Convened at 6:34 PM**

**Auditorium
Mayor Donna Holaday/Cheryl Sweeney Presided**

**Present: Nick deKanter, Steve Cole, Cheryl Sweeney, Mayor Donna Holaday,
Audrey McCarthy, Bruce Menin**

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Chairman Mayor Donna Holaday called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM. A roll call was taken finding all members present. All those present stood for for the Pledge of Allegiance.

At this point Vice-Chairman Cheryl Sweeney took over chairmanship of the meeting.

FY16 BUDGET PRESENTATION:

Cheryl Sweeney welcomed all in attendance and turned the budget presentation over to Superintendent Susan Viccaro who presented the FY16 budget to the Committee and the public. The public had been given a copy of the proposed budget and were able to follow the presentation which was augmented by a power point presentation. Superintendent Viccaro explained the budget process. She explained the numerous cuts which had to be made because of reductions in revenue sources, including school choice tuitions, circuit breaker, student activity fees, and kindergarten and preschool revolving accounts, and the fact that some fixed expenses will go up, such as a 3 percent scheduled increase in contracts.

Mayor Holaday explained to the audience that the city was picking up the tab for freshman sports and the new security system for the high school with end of year surpluses in the overall budget.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Cheryl Sweeney invited the audience to voice their comments regarding the budget.

Eileen Harnch-Grady, 10 Cushing Ave. CONCERN: She stated she was grateful that freshman sports was being reinstated, but wondered why this was proposed in the first place. It seems it is a year to year bus issue - will it come up again.

NHS Principal Mike Parent stated he had to propose cutting freshman sports, as he was given a task to cut \$192,000 from the budget, and didn't want to cut staff. He said it was basically between a rock and a hard place. He supports the sports program.

Superintendent Viccaro said they were looking everywhere to cut, and did not know if it will come up again. They needed to get to the bottom line.

Elizabeth Groleau **CONCERN:** She was shocked when she learned that freshman sports had been cancelled - sports are important. Class sizes are huge. A 4% increase is upsetting.

Rebecca Brodish **CONCERN:** She stated it was frustrating to be in the same position year after year. In a statement that she read she suggested ways to overcome the gap, including using funds in free cash to fully fund the budget, reconvening the revenue task force, and the city taxing to the full 2.5% allowed by law. She wanted the budget to be more transparent.

Renee Ames, Forrester Street **CONCERN:** She was concerned with the cuts to classroom teachers. If you cut teachers, class size increases. She was glad that freshman sports has been picked up by the city.

Graham Wright, Prospect Street **CONCERN:** He wanted to know why we were making cuts at all. There must be longer term solutions - how do we get more than 4%.

Susan **CONCERN:** She wondered why we took such a significant loss in revenue. Nancy Lysik explained. Mayor Holaday spoke of the city allocation and explained that when she took office the allocation has had a 24% increase over 5 years.

Mary Ellen Hoiseth, Virginia Lane **CONCERN:** There were so many things in years past such as foreign language in the elementary schools and many enrichment programs; these are all gone. Class sizes are increasing. Stop putting our fingers in the dike - we are being very shortsighted.

Ralph Orlando, NHS School Council member **CONCERN:** He stated the School Councils were not afforded the opportunity to review the budget. Three members of the School Committee, at the last meeting, said the budget was unacceptable; there is not much change in the budget tonight - put back the NHS cuts.

Matt Coughlin, Bromfield Street **CONCERN:** He is a charter school teacher. He stated the health of the city is directly reflected to the health of the schools.

David Hochheiser, Forrester Street **CONCERN:** He wondered what Newburyport would become if we underfund the schools - it didn't make sense to him. What would it cost taxpayers to fully fund the schools? Mayor Holaday said there were 17,000 residents and 8,000 households. Bruce Menin did the math and said it would be \$75 per household.

Ralph Orlando, 4 Wm. Hall Drive **CONCERN:** He spoke of the Citizens for Education Fund. He applauded the Mayor and citizens for giving so much. He suggested looking at bussing, food services, Pre-K and full day K (they don't fully fund themselves), administrative saving, fees. He pled with the Committee to not accept this budget. Other districts are putting more money into their schools.

Allison Valentine **CONCERN:** She supports teachers and stated we have an amazing superintendent but urged the Committee to not pass this budget.

Colleen Mcelroy, High Street **CONCERN:** We are limited by prop 2 ½ - we are growing by 2 ½ a year. Mayor Holaday explained that last year and this year it was a tax smoothing process and we will go back to 2 ½ % in the future.

City Councilor Meghan Kinsey **CONCERN:** She suggested helping fund the schools through third-party fundraising websites like Kickstarter or GoFundMe. Mayor Holaday explained that fundraising cannot fund salaries. The audience suggested using fundraising money to fund supplies and move those line items dollars to fund teachers. Ms. Kinsey suggested re-starting the Citizens for Education fund.

Mike Sullivan, Summit Place **CONCERN:** He said we need long term planning. He questioned Special Ed funding. Mayor Holaday explained at length why this was required.

Pam Keely, Payson Street **CONCERN:** She spoke of the repercussions of cutting teachers at the Elementary School. She said we should take a long hard look at the cuts. Superintendent Viccaro explained the teacher cuts.

Eric Luck **CONCERN:** He spoke of the Bresnahan School and stated it doesn't feel like we are supporting this school. He wondered when we will draw the line and asked what has been added back. Superintendent Viccaro explained.

Karen Felch **CONCERN:** She was concerned with cutting two teachers at the Bresnahan School and said it was disheartening - we can't cut our teachers.

Joan Sheehan, Bresnahan teacher **CONCERN:** She spoke of cutting teachers at Bresnahan. Bresnahan Principal spoke about staffing at the school. Superintendent Viccaro explained enrollment trends, decline - we must plan for that. We may use School Choice for younger children in the future.

Audrey McCarthy asked for numbers. Answer: Bresnahan, pre K - 3 = almost 700, 3 administrators; Molin - 345 (365 next year), 1 administrator; Nock - 560, 2 administrators; High School - 783, 2 administrators. Superintendent Viccaro spoke regarding administration - we do need a third administrator at the High School.

Jesse Longmeyer **CONCERN:** He inquired regarding students out of district and asked someone to speak to that. Superintendent Viccaro explained why we are required by law to provide these services and explained that our number of students remained in the state average.

Cheryl Sweeney thanked all for coming.

VOTE TO OPT OUT OF SCHOOL CHOICE FOR 2015-2016 YEAR:

Cheryl Sweeney explained the law regarding School Choice.

Bruce Menin clarified by explaining that they were just not opening up seats for this next school year.

Superintendent Viccaro stated that her recommendation was to not open School Choice for this next school year.

Motion

On a motion by Nick deKanter and seconded by Mayor Holaday it was

VOTED: To opt out of the School Choice Law program for the 2015-2016 school year.

Motion Passed Unanimously

ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion by Mayor Holaday and seconded by Audrey McCarthy it was

VOTED: To adjourn the Public Hearing at 8:30 PM.

Motion Passed Unanimously