

**NEWBURYPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE
BUDGET WORKSHOP
Monday, March 31, 2014**

**Newburyport High School
Meeting Convened at 6:00 PM**

**Clipper Cafe
Mayor Donna Holaday/Cheryl Sweeney Presided**

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

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Donna Holaday called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Ms. Sweeney called for a roll call, with six members present, Steve Cole absent, (Mr. Cole arrived at 6:10 PM). All those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

FY15 BUDGET OVERVIEW:

Superintendent Susan Viccaro gave an in-depth FY15 budget overview to the Committee. She commented on the fact that we have had 36 teaching staff reductions that have not been replaced. The budget summary contained the following:

- School Budgets 5 Year History
- Federal/State Grants – 5 Year History
- Private Foundations
- FY15 Staff Reductions
- FY15 Staff Increases
- Instructional Assistants – Changes in Staff
- FY15 Budget by Category
- FY15 High School Budget by Category
- FY15 Middle School Budget by Category
- FY15 Bresnahan School Budget by Category
- FY15 District Budget by Category
- FY15 Budget Summary
- FY14 vs. FY15 Budget
- Budget Increase Breakdown
- FY15 vs FY14 Revenue & Expenses

Assistant Superintendent Angela Bik gave the Committee an overview of Grants.

Discussion:

Bruce Menin said he appreciated this realistic, transparent overview of the budget. He asked the Superintendent to:

[^] Identify areas where we have cut previously and what we should restore.

Superintendent Viccaro stated at NHS she would like to provide more staff, restore the Business Department, the Strings program, the curriculum coordinator, social studies, and science. She would like to restore K-12 foreign language instruction, provide math interventionists, and technology integrators.

[^] How is this not a running-in-place budget?

Superintendent Viccaro said this budget gets us some of the things we need. It is just the beginning and we have a long way to go.

Assistant Superintendent Angela Bik stated we have cut back programs until they got slimmer and slimmer – we are starting to build it back.

Michael Luekens said we need \$2.35 million from the City – do we know what the city appropriation will be?

Mayor Holaday said that they have completed all of the Department budget reviews – they have a 5% increase to date. She stated there have been cuts in local aid – we cannot make up the total gap.

Steve Cole commented on:

- △ The increase in substitutes/leave of absence costs and asked how did the Superintendent come up with these figures – he would like a 5-year history.

Exec. Asst. of Finance Nancy Lysik explained.

- △ Leasing technology – are we looking into this?

Superintendent Viccaro said they are looking at a 3-year plan concerning leasing.

- △ Programs – How are we going to rebuild foreign language? At the Middle School this is provided on a cart.

Superintendent Viccaro said she is working with the Leadership Team concerning this.

Audrey McCarthy questioned the food service company, and asked if any thought was being given to changing the provider. She asked if the budget reflects keeping Chartwells. The answer was yes, they have one more year of their contract.

Nick deKanter commented that the increase this year is just to tread water; what can we do next year – we are not moving ahead. This is a barely make-do budget – we need to do long-term planning.

Bruce Menin asked:

- △ Are there conversations taking place regarding Chartwells?

Superintendent Viccaro said conversations are taking place.

- △ We need to find out what kinds of technology students have available to them – is this being done?

Superintendent Viccaro said a survey is going to take place this spring.

- △ Resources of revenues – what conversations are taking place?

Mayor Holaday commented that the new auditorium at the Nock/Molin regarding usage of schools for outside activities should be looked into.

Steve Cole asked if there are any added monies for Student Support.

Bruce Menin stated his thanks for getting this document – it gives us an honest look at things.

Cheryl Sweeney asked:

- △ With the freeze on supplies, are we making up for what we were not able to get.

Superintendent Viccaro said this is what teachers need to implement the curriculum.

Asst. Superintendent Bik said there are still needs that are not in this budget.

Ms. Lysik said schools were very, very conservative in their requests.

- △ What will be done to keep schools from spending their entire budget up front?

Superintendent Viccaro said they have implemented a step process on spending with increments of 25%.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Meghan Kinsey, 1 Griffin Court

CONCERN: She asked if we don't find the money, what happens? Superintendent Viccaro said we will reduce to 5.8%; staffing and programs will go.

Mark Belanger, 17 Marquand

CONCERN: He stated he is a fan of Special Education. This makes up a quarter of this budget with an increase to 27%. Is there any strategy to get ahead of these costs? Special Education Director Dr. Dee said they are working hard; they have 4 programs in place – we can keep a lot of kids in district – putting services in place – moving forward.

Ted Waldron, Francis Dr.

CONCERN: He stated the theme of the whole thing is revenue, improving the school department is the answer. We need to attract people to Newburyport. There is a necessity for kids to learn foreign language when they are young. We need to invest in our

schools and increase our ranking.

Preston Carey

CONCERN: He stated we are going to have to ask for money – we are running on a deficit and be hard-nose as to what we are asking for. He asked for an explanation of the receptionist and janitor.

Lisa Mead, Purchase St.

CONCERN: She stated we should start by being unapologetic regarding what we need for our schools. This started in 1984 with the passing of Proposition 2 ½. We get minimum aid from the State. We have a responsibility to find money ourselves.

Laura Boys, 11 School Street

CONCERN: We need to look out 3 to 5 years.

Dr. Ralph Orlando, 4 Wm. Hall DR

CONCERN: He addressed the following:

- ⤴ Does this budget carry over the deficit?
- ⤴ \$1.9M in expenses – what does this buy?
- ⤴ We may not get an extra 5% - this will be a million dollar deficit.
- ⤴ Missing needs – what are they?
- ⤴ How much money does the city have in free cash?

Anthony Lauranzano, 8 Hawthorne Rd.

CONCERN: We need to “fix it” - we need ideas. Audrey

McCarthy stated there is a bill pending to halt unfunded mandates.

Jay Ianini, NEF President

CONCERN: We need to fix this now.

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT:

Assistant Superintendent Angela Bik gave the Committee an overview which included progress made, new programs and professional development. Even though there is a lean budget, business still goes on.

Discussion:

Steve Cole asked for clarification of an ARRA Grant. Ms. Bik said this money has now dried up. The money given was to give the schools a boost.

Cheryl Sweeney inquired regarding Title I:

- ⤴ How much goes to teachers. Ms. Bik said 100% goes to salaries.
- ⤴ If there was a choice what would you use this money for? Ms. Bik said to build programs.

Bruce Menin inquired regarding Title I funding – please explain. Ms. Bik said free and reduced lunch is the foundation that this is based on. Title I funding has decreased by \$100,000 since she came here.

SPECIAL EDUCATION:

Dr. Barbara Dee updated the Committee on Special Education. She stated her goal is to make existing programs stronger to provide for our children. The additional programs she commented on were as follows:

- ⤴ Newburyport Academy – NHS – prevention program
- ⤴ Post Grad – looking to expand programs for these students
- ⤴ Inclusion – provide services to try to get them back into regular programs
- ⤴ Grants – very little grant money

Discussion:

Cheryl Sweeney asked concerning the decrease in Psychologist and instructional assistants – why?

Dr. Dee explained.

Audrey McCarthy asked re. Psychologist – is this a full position? Dr. Dee said it is a .5.

Bruce Menin said he is concerned about this – will look closely at this. Superintendent Viccaro said she and the Leadership Team had to make hard decisions after much research.

Audrey McCarthy asked re. The on-site support Psychologist – all stays the same. Yes

Cheryl Sweeney asked

- ⤴ What percent of the current budget is Special Education. Dr. Dee said 25%

- ⤴ Do we have any cases pending for outside placement? No
- ⤴ How many students are in the Special Education Program? 341

Audrey McCarthy stated she felt that students would not be coming back to Newburyport from an outside placement. We need to go forward knowing this.

Steve Cole said we need to maintain a thorough review as to how these students are doing.

Cheryl Sweeney asked what are we doing to support inclusion. Dr. Dee explained and added that our goal is inclusion.

Bruce Menin asked how do we measure success of inclusion? Dr. Dee said IEP's review – annual review process. Ms. Bik added seeing how they are growing and achieving.

FEES – TRANSPORTATION (BUS):

Superintendent Viccaro updated the Committee on transportation needs and made a recommendation for a fee structure which is as follows:

Proposed changes to FY15

\$300 per rider – no early discount, will be registering in May online. After 2 student in a family there will be a discounted rate of \$100 per additional student.

Change allowed for emergency/temporary (1 week or less) if room is available on bus; with fee if appropriate.

Discussion:

Bruce Menin questioned IC and Charter ridership.

Cheryl Sweeney asked if we were mandated to transport IC and Charter schools. Answer – Yes.

Steve Cole stated to his knowledge we are not mandated to provide parochial students transportation. Superintendent Viccaro read the law concerning this.

Cheryl Sweeney asked if they will pay ridership fee. Answer – Yes, they pay the same fee.

Motion:

On a motion by Nick deKanter and seconded by Audrey McCarthy it was

VOTED: To approve the recommended proposed changes to FY15 transportation fee structure as follows:

\$300 per rider – no early discount, will be registering in May online. After 2 students in a family, there will be a discounted rate of \$100 per additional student.

Change allowed for emergency temporary (1 week or less) if room is available on bus; with fee if appropriate.

Discussion:

Steve Cole asked if he had four children riding on buses, what would it cost me. \$1,000

He stated this was unreasonable – he suggested \$150 for additional student.

Audrey McCarthy said it is painful to raise fees - \$1.66 a day – she is surprised fees haven't gone up sooner. She supports the recommendation.

Bruce Menin said he will support the recommendation – he said he does not like to vote on something immediately.

Michael Luekens said he will support the recommendation – it presents minimum pain.

Steve Cole spoke re: making the family cap less – the increase is a little steep.

Nancy Lysik clarified the proposed increase as after 2 students in a family there will be a discounted rate of \$100 per additional student.

Steve Cole said that this was fair.

Public Comment was moved up to give the audience a chance to comment on this.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Gail Conway, Marlboro Street **CONCERN:**
up at the Bresnahan School. She said it is a zoo.

She commented on the parent drop off/pick

Mark Belanger **CONCERN:**

He commented on access.

Dr. Ralph Orlando, Wm. Hall DR **CONCERN:**

He commented on the following:

- ⤴ Do you look at what it costs you?
- ⤴ Times are tough – look at vendors.
- ⤴ Look at mandated students.

Roll Call Vote:

Bruce Menin - Yes
Cheryl Sweeney - Yes
Steve Cole - Yes
Nick deKanter - Yes
Mayor Holaday - Absent
Michael Luekens - Yes
Audrey McCarthy - Yes

Yes – 6 Absent – 1

Motion Passed

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Jay Ianini, NEF President **CONCERN:**

What gets cut if we only get 5%.

Dr. Ralph Orlando, Wm. Hall DR **CONCERN:**

He questioned the needs of the district.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion

On a motion by Steve Cole and seconded by Audrey McCarthy it was

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 8:32 PM.

Motion Passed

Mayor Holaday absent for vote