

**FINANCE COMMITTEE/SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING
MARCH 23, 2010
TOWN HALL, MEETING ROOM A**

**OPEN SESSION
CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. J. Fay, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. with the following persons present: Richard Howard, Robert White, Marion Swan, Janice Skelton, Todd Wilson, Michael Schaaf, and School Committee members J. Loeb, E. Traverso, J. Arsenault, L. Dietz, B. Hopping and H. O'Flynn. Also present were J. Cuff, Financial Director; R. Korb, Superintendent; and S. McAdams, Winthrop Principal.

Two sets of Minutes of the Finance Committee were approved.

C. OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Loeb thanked the Finance Committee for the invitation and reviewed three-year experiences of being in desperate financial straits and being pulled out by an override, stimulus funds, and litigation/insurance money reimbursements. This year layoffs have already been announced, and there don't seem to be any miracles. On April 1, a Tri-Board meeting will discuss revenue and ten days later, the Bean Counting will provide the final analysis. Cuts from the school budget have included personnel and even a program – world languages at the Middle School.

D. CENTRAL OFFICE AND SPECIAL EDUCATION BUDGET PRESENTATION

Mr. Korb reviewed the budget figure of \$23,419,525 stating that it anticipates a 1% increase. Mr. Fay reminded that the Finance Committee had set a target of 0%. Mr. Korb spoke of losses of revenue and budget funding issues including professional salaries (step and category increases) – questioned by the Finance Committee – and increased staffing necessitated by SPED and ESL programs. Additionally, health insurance membership by staff has increased by 18%, retirement by 8%, and workers' compensation by 42%. An estimated shortfall is \$1,117,724. Staff and program reductions, along with reimbursements and Choice funds, anticipate that the shortfall gap will be covered. He listed the reductions by line items. He outlined the outside funds and grants which are critical to the budget. The elementary reductions were explained as much as is currently known.

Mr. Loeb left the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Special Education budget discussion ensued with the review of the PowerPoint presentation of total students receiving services, a pie chart, and budget comparison for 6 years. Mr. Korb announced a comprehensive study with Mary Gallant, SPED Director, and consultants to review the delivery model, staffing, and transportation. Mrs. Skelton suggested that, in addition to the experts and practicing teachers, the community should be invited; for example, parents whose children went through the schools with special education assistance. Mr. Howard cautioned going into this process because of the individual legal mandates by each family of a SPED student. Mrs. Skelton cautioned that consultant fees may offset the savings that are realized by change. When an audience member compared in-district and out-of-district costs, Mr. Korb spoke of the current study regarding early childhood in conjunction with Birth to Three, Head Start, and other pre-K areas where the need is intense.

Mr. Korb spoke of the upcoming appeal of \$500,000 in the spring, 2010, for technology. Mr. Fay asked for a breakdown of the needs for technology. Mr. Korb also spoke of grants used for professional development and use of Choice funds, both of which evoked discussion.

Dr. O'Flynn asked if "free cash" would be available for the school district as it has been used on the municipal side for purchase of a police car. Finance Committee members listened. Mr. Korb mentioned the short- and long-term study of maintenance and capital improvements, \$150,000 of which is immediate short-term needs. About \$1 million in needs for capital maintenance projects will be presented to the School Committee on April 8. The Finance Committee requested the detailed list before Bean Counting.

To Mr. Schaaf's question, Mr. Korb reported that the Ad Hoc Town/School Committee is working on cooperative expenditures.

Sean Gresch, from the audience, spoke of his employer's (IBM) work with school districts that have taken old computers, gutted them, and put them into a cloud system. He said he would help with acquiring personnel to assist in the future.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.