

Budget Public Hearing
February 15, 2011
7 PM Room 124 Town Hall
MINUTES

The Chair, Shawn Dooley called the public hearing to order at 7:10 PM.

Present: John Olivieri, Linda Andrews, Ross Gilleland, Thomas Doyle, Shawn Dooley,

Also present: Claire Jackson.

Mr. Dooley gave an overview of the Norfolk Public Schools budget beginning with the FY06 budget. The district is operating with \$1 million dollars less than five years ago. He informed the audience that the Selectman will not bring forward an override.

He gave the ground rules for the public hearing. He said the meeting was for public comment only not a questions and answer session. The discussion will be organized into eleven topics with ten minutes per item and 3 minutes per person to comment. He believes this is a fair way for all audience members to share feedback to the school committee to help them build the budget.

Dr. Jackson gave an overview of the current state of the budget with recommended reduction and fixed costs for FY12.

BUS FEE

The proposed fee for the bus transportation is \$150 per student in grades 5 and 6 with \$300 cap per family.

KINDERGARTEN FEE

The proposed fee for Kindergarten is \$3500 per year for full-day Kindergarten.

COMMENT:

Nicole Cleasby, Wompanoag Road, is concerned about the fee being set too high. Families may decide not to participate since it is not mandatory for students to attend full-day kindergarten.

BAND FEE

The proposed fee for Band is \$175 per student 5 and 6 grade.

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Dr. Jackson compared NPS to similar districts Pre-K to 6 that all have Assistant Principals. She recommended the addition of Assistant Principals/Curriculum Specialist at each school. The Assistant Principal is the operations person in the building. She believes they are needed in elementary schools. At this time, there is one in the budget for Freeman-Centennial.

COMMENT:

Clay Beatty, Main Street, did not see the benefit of adding a senior level position such as Assistant Principal to the budget because teachers may be cut.

Ellen Horton, NTA President and teacher, commented that she believes that teachers who work with students should be maintained and not a hire an Assistant Principal at this time.

Laura Petze, Fernadale Road, stated that she would like to have a list of the comparable towns.

Dr. Jackson will email her the list.

Kathy Maloof, teacher and resident, Grove Street, informed the School Committee that some towns give teachers a stipend to be Head Teacher to stand in for Principal instead of having an Assistant Principal.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Jackson explained that professional development is the coordinated articulated effort with teachers to plan curriculum. As a result of this work, high performing districts have curriculum posted on their websites.

COMMENTS:

Suzanne Reynolds-Alpert, Medway Street, commented that she believes that professional development is key to the school system and crucial to be included in the budget.

Ellen Horton, NTA President and teacher, agreed that professional development is important for the school systems but because the DESE is updating curriculum using the common core curriculum and MA frameworks, next year may be the time to work on this effort.

Heather Lufy, Union Street, stated that professional development is about collaborating with teachers to come up with the best way to teach the students. In light of the staffing cuts that are inevitable it would be beneficial for the staff to work together to plan curriculum.

TECHNOLOGY

Dr. Jackson explained why it is necessary to put money back into technology for the students and teachers. She explained that most schools have a technology integration specialist too. Mr. Olivieri would like the depreciation of software investigated.

COMMENTS:

Ellen Horton, NTA President and teacher, admitted that technology is lacking at the Freeman Centennial School. She questions money being spent at FC because of new school.

Suzanne Reynolds-Alpert, Medway Street, commented that she understands the need for technology and upgraded computers to run new education software. Teachers need technology integration too.

Tim Kelley, School Street, inquired about the breakdown of funds for HOD vs Freeman. Shawn Dooley, commented that any purchases such as smart boards will be portable and will go to HOD after the new school is built.

Kathy Maloof, teacher, said that the computers in the computer lab are up to date. She believes NPS needs to focus on instruction.

Sue Locke, Kilpatrick Way, believes the students do not need more time on technology. She does not agree with \$100,000 spent on technology at this point.

BOOKS AND MATERIALS

Dr. Jackson, said the school district needs a plan for upgrading books and materials. Each year one area should be the focus.

COMMENTS:

Suzanne Reynolds-Alpert, reminded the School Committee that many of the new books will be electronic.

Mr. Beatty, stated he does not think the students need to be on the cutting edge of technology.

SPECIAL EDUCATION REORGANIZATION

Dr. Jackson explained that there is clear data based on the Futures Education Report that the district is spending more than necessary on Special Education. We want a high quality education for all. There are two existing programs in SPED that address students with developmental delays and other special needs. The law states that schools must provide all students access to general curriculum in the least restrictive environment. These areas will be studied in the spring and summer. Mr. Dooley stated that these programs should serve our children and be sustainable. He would like to hire a consultant for NPS to do an assessment of the programs from the parents perspective.

COMMENTS:

Holli Merritt, teacher and resident from Leland Road, inquired about why a consultant would be needed. She asked how a consultant would be paid.

Judy Mannoogian, Speech and Language Specialist, would like to see the ACES Program stay as it is. She believes it is successful and works well.

Sue Locke, read a statement from PAC. Believes the aides are important to children with special needs and regular education students.

Clay Beatty, daughter in the ACES program, commented that he thinks they do a great job and does not understand how so many cuts are being proposed for SPED.

Laura Petze, Ferndale Road, daughter in ACES program. She would like to see consistency in this program.

Tim Kelly, School Street, He asked questions about the Futures report. He thought it was more of a numbers/accounting report. Shawn Dooley explained that the report was an audit.

Julie Redlitz, likes the idea of putting money back into the general curriculum but has concerns about cutting aides and how it affects regular education students. She would like both sides to work together to establish the cuts.

READING SPECIALISTS

Dr. Jackson explained that we have 4 Reading Specialists at NPS. These are regular education teachers. Special Educators have specific training in reading programs, too. The average district has one Reading Specialist for every 400-500 students.

Jackie Simmons, Forest Lane, asked if the towns that we were compared to have Title 1. She asked if RTI can be implemented without Reading Specialists.

Dr. Jackson explained RTI: teachers identify the problem and provide a “just in time” intervention to help teachers to reduce referral to SPED.

Beth O'Connor, reading specialist, explained the job of the Reading Specialists at the NPS. They work with small groups and in inclusion classrooms. They are integral to the professional development for teachers. The book room is maintained by the Reading Specialists.

Kathy Maloof, reading specialists are trained in Wilson, a SPED language based reading program. They use this for regular education students, too. Reading specialists work in inclusion classrooms and create curriculum. The level of service will not be the same with 5 fewer teachers.

CLASSROOM TEACHER REDUCTION

Dr. Jackson stated that class size is important in the younger grades (K-3: under 22 students and grades 4-6: max. 25. All of our classes will remain at these levels. She would like the School Committee to create a policy pertaining to class size.

Ellen Horton, teacher, agrees that it is a great idea to write a policy for maximum class size.

OTHER/GENERAL COMMENTS

Sue Locke, explained that the PAC is a group for parents to help decide what is important for all NPS students.

Suzanne Reynold-Alpert, state that she likes idea of another meeting to discuss issues and cuts and for both sides discuss opinions.

Lisa Altham-Hickey, stated that technology is necessary to help students and teachers with the implementation of RTI.

Ellen Horton, teacher, inquired about update to the budget on the website. Dr. Jackson will update it after the Advisory Board meeting on Thursday. She also commented that the cuts in support will affect the teachers and ultimately the students.

SPECIAL ED

Nicole Cleasby, Wompanoag Road, commented that the school is building a community of acceptance with special education and regular education students.

Julie Gallagher, pre-school teacher. She has been teaching 26 years. She commented that she hopes that the reduction in special education does not result in more students outplaced. She can see the benefit of integration in her classroom every day.

Dr. Jackson reminds the public that the budget is a plan that will change over the next couple of months.

Shawn Dooley, thanked the audience for all the feedback. He encourages community members to email the School Committee with any ideas or questions.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

MOTION: Linda Andrews made a motion to enter executive session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining because an open session will have a detrimental effect on the School Committee's bargaining position not to return in open session. Mr. Gilleland seconded.

The motion passed.

Roll Call:

John Olivieri

Ross Gilleland

Linda Andrews

Shawn Dooley

Thomas Doyle

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.