

**Provincetown School Committee Meeting
and
Public Hearing on School Budget
Veterans Memorial Elementary School
Library Media Center – Room #73
2 Mayflower Lane
Provincetown, MA 02657**

Wednesday
January 19, 2010
5:00 p.m.

Members Present: Kerry Adams, Peter Grosso, Carrie Notaro,
Shannon Patrick and Deb Trovato.

Members Absent: none

Staff: Dr. Beth Singer, Superintendent
Kim Pike, District Principal
Betty White, Business Manager

Others: Many Educators

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The meeting was called to order at 5:10 p.m.

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AGENDA

Public Comments

Amy Germain said she has come to each of the budget meetings and she has spoken to many different people. Her observation is that she is surprised with the lack of debate and conversation regarding the budget - especially since we're talking about significant job cuts. She also thinks that not doing things as they've already been done is a good thing. She would have liked to hear a bold and vigorous debate and thinking about being bold – How about if we put everyone in our district down to 80% salary? - this would save our district \$60K - another suggestion would be to go ahead and pink slip everybody and then start over. Again, don't do everything the way we have always done it but enjoy a vigorous debate.

PUBLIC HEARING:

FY-11 SHOOOL BUDGET DISCUSSION/REVIEW

The public hearing began by having Dr. Singer introduce the budget and the reasons for some of the changes. She gave thanks to Beth Francis, the voice of history and culture of the school, and Betty White, the Business Manager, for her invaluable help in preparing the budget. Beth has been talking to many people and has received help from many people; much of what she has learned is reflected in this budget. One of her key goals – and the most important – is transparency. It is hoped that everyone understands the proposed budget. Beth continued that we want the budget to be full of opportunities. She sees opportunity in multi-aged groupings and development of the school. Finally it is our need to be responsive to the declining enrollment and - with your approval - she wants to highlight some points. There are reductions in staff to match student enrollment and she's proposing reductions across the board.

This proposal involves a 3% pay raise and also the movement of roles into the central office category. There will also be the addition of a district receptionist. Multi age groupings are a well established practice. Grades 4 through 8 are the key to the schools continuation. We have the opportunity to engage in a rigorous middle school program on the lower Cape and yet the proposed budget is very lean.

Then – with the budget projected up on a screen – a detailed explanation followed for each figure. Betty W. ran the projector and Beth S. gave the running commentary.

There was a summary of the budget which depicted a 5.7% decrease from FY 10. We're level funding grants that we anticipate and the ELE revolving account is \$45K. The reduction in 8.75 FTEs was also pointed out on the proposed budget.

On the 2nd page Beth showed how she's restructuring the central office which involved moving positions into this category and explained the addition of a district receptionist. This new position would be responsible for answering and triaging all phone calls and tending the door. The only other change is an increase in legal services which may or may not be needed.

Carrie Notaro wondered about projects in the elementary school. She has found that her kids don't come home with a lot of art work. Beth responded that our students receive less specialist time because they need more academic time. Kerry Adams then asked how many classes the art teachers teach and found that they teach 5 – 2 at the high school. He then asked, "You don't think this will have any effect on the children?"

Beth indicated that art and music are being limited to one time per week for academics but we have just so many hours in the day and the bottom line is: **OUR STUDENTS HAVE TO PASS MCAS.** Beth also said that we offer so many courses that we wind up with not very many students in the classes and she doesn't think a class of 5 students is a class at all; it's a difficult balance to find. Every elementary school student has art once week.

A back and forth discussion then took place over the cuts faced in arts and music until a teacher/parent, Victoria Hatch, rose to speak. She said that her daughter has only 4 hours of art/week and now a reduction is projected?

Amy Germain, a teacher, said that the artwork is throughout this building. The artwork is here and it's robust and it could be more robust but it's a wonderful enriching part of the program.

A shift in subject was then made to food services and the decision to pare down to one cafeteria.

Nataya Bostwick, a senior in the high school, said that Beth had indicated that students had been asked about electives they might be interested in and she was never consulted. She was asked if she had never received a questionnaire. She said she had neither been asked by any one nor received a questionnaire. It was explained to Nataya that the 12th grade was not included in the process. Seniors were not surveyed.

Then reduction in staff explanations were pointed out, i.e., reduction of an administration assistant to the principal, reduction in athletics, a reduction in a paraprofessional, reduction in cafeteria, and a

reduction of a custodian.

Victoria Hatch had another question: Is there any way we can afford to keep the art at 1.0?

Kerry said that he can see both sides of this issue but wondered if we are going to hurt ourselves in the long run – by reducing the salaries of the art and music people? The difference is \$34K and he hopes we think about this more. He also wondered about the people making \$50K and then now cut to 30K. Will they be coming back?

Deb said that we have to be responsible to the town and Beth agreed that it's a very tough question.

Amy Germain commented that – during budgets – the enrollment figures help and then you can compare apples to apples. Beth replied that it's not apples to apples. When we make selections for next year we'll be able to use enrollment but this year it's very hard to create that data looking backwards.

Amy continued by saying that the budget information hasn't been made available to us only through purloined copies. We are going to be asking people to say yea or nay at the town meeting and the more familiar everyone is with the budget and the reasons for it the better it will be. She will be looking for the enrollment numbers; Shannon agreed and wants concrete numbers.

Peter Grosso said – we can put the budget on line – but the average John Doe won't be able to understand it. Amy suggested that maybe something more user friendly is warranted.

Beth said - it's only the school committee that has the line by line responsibility.

Peter said that the FinCom will have the budget before them. They can ask line by line and if they want to go line by line but all we have to do is defend the bottom line and then they can ask questions.

Betty White said that the budget is a public document and any of you can come and look at it; Beth said it had not been made public yet because it was a Work-In-Progress (WIP). When it is adopted, is when it goes public.

Beth Francis asked - what if you go to the FinCom and they send you back? Peter said we have to vote on this and if the FinCom say it isn't good enough then we may have to renegotiate.

Deb said - I can only speak for myself but I think we've made enough cuts.

Betty White said that what you're looking for from the FinCom is their recommendation.

Victoria Hatch has never seen as solid a budget and she doesn't think there's anything wrong with it and she knows it will pass.

Beth said that the FinCom can only withhold their recommendation.

Deb asked for more clarification on electives. Beth said that if students want to take 4 years of Spanish, or other electives, it could be done. Deb also wondered if the Academy is in this budget. Beth said it's level funded.

The major change in the Special Education budget is for “out of district” placement. And a small increase in the director’s salary which is paid out of a grant.

The 2nd packet on the screen contained what we anticipate spending on school choice. The \$237,908. is a bit over what we expect to receive. School Choice is where we put our money for growth. We took the salary of the academy teacher and split it half and half; half in appropriation and half in School Choice previously it was 100% School Choice. Removing half of the academy teacher and one special education teacher salaries brought the Choice budget into line with expected revenues. Deb asked if the funding for the academy is realistic? Beth said that this amount is level funded and we spent all of it this year and all of it last year. As enrollment declines, it’s controversial to do this kind of spending at all and so the safest thing to do is to keep it level funded. If we had \$3K more in it this year - it would have been spent.

Kerry asked - how many mentors do we have – and what is the average that a mentor gets paid? Answer: It’s between 500 and 1K dollars. Thus, do we have all the mentors we need? Beth said that it’s all about finding a good match. The rest of the packet summarized the Academy of which Kerry is much in favor.

Nancy Flasher, a teacher, said that each mentor is paid \$600 and there has never been a lack of mentors.

Carrie anguished about reducing positions and Peter said that he has complete faith in Beth’s work here and we’re not eliminating just combining classes, etc. Kerry said these cuts are huge - could we restore some portion of them? You could lose valuable people with these cuts.

Peter asked - where do we draw the line? There was evidently a letter received in reference to a cut and Kerry said that art and music are very necessary - he’s just concerned that these people will be lost.

Beth said – one of the problems is that this is unpredictable you don’t know who may react. Our Industrial Arts (IA) teacher comes from Chatham that’s a lot of miles to work less time. That’s a lot of miles to work less time and if you live so many miles away a cut like this is crippling.

Peter said to Betty W. – we’ve got a deadline – We’re meeting with the BOS on February 8th and then the FinCom on February 9th.

Betty said that the 1st deadline is December – then you vote on the budget. Last year we had 4 public hearings and then you take the voted budget to the FinCom.

After a bit more back and forth debate the following motion was made:

Motion: Move to not accept the budget as presented and reconsider reinstating the current positions in art, music, and IA back to 1.0 FTEs.

Motion: Carrie Notaro

Seconded: Kerry Adams

Vote: 0 in favor - 5 opposed - 0 abs

(the motion was seconded for the purpose of discussion)

Amendment to above motion: Leave IA and music at .8 and increase art from .6 to .8 FTE

Amendment: Kerry Adams Seconded: Shannon Patrick

Amendment defeated 2 in favor - 3 opposed - 0 abstentions.

(Now the group returned to the original motion and it, too, was defeated by all.)

Deb said that when she and Carrie met with PAE President, David McGlothlin, they discussed mentors and – as a result of the discussion – she proposed the following motion:

Motion: Move to add line item to FY11 budget in the amount of \$5K for mentoring but not necessarily in the way the mentoring is handled now.

Motion: Deb Trovato Seconded: Shannon Patrick

Vote: 2 in favor – 1 opposed – 2 abstentions (SP & CN)

Beth thinks a lot of people would like to come in and do free mentoring. Amy G. has questions about the mentoring budget and she'd like to hear Dr. Singer explain where the core mapping looks to have the MCAS framework and also to speak to the Academy piece. Amy was reminded that the public hearing was over. There is an overlap. Peter said that there have been two other avenues to get funds and he wants to wait and see if these other avenues come through instead of putting more money in the budget at this time.

Motion: Move to accept the budget as amended.

Motion: Kerry Adams Seconded: Shannon Patrick Vote: 5-0-0.

Unfinished Business:

FY-11 School Budget

Job Description: Special Education Secretary – 2nd Reading

There was a bit of explanation by Beth about the secretary making the appointments for the guidance counselor. Amy G. objected about personnel personalities being discussed in a public meeting. She was thanked for her input and Peter said we try to not do that.

Motion: Move to accept the Special Education Secretary job description as presented.

Motion: Deb Trovato Seconded: Kerry Adams Vote: 5-0-0.

PSC Comments

Kerry Adams said that one of the things we didn't discuss was the MIS budget which is quite significant and we should discuss how this money is spent. We are an art community and yet we cut the art budget?!

Deb Trovato said a big thank you for the budget and accolades to all. She and Carrie are sitting in the last Monday of every month with the PAE – not to negotiate but to understand their concerns. She repeated the mentors' concerns and how that whole mentorship program worked. One of the other things that did come up was that teachers do go into their pockets for text books and she would like to put it on an agenda for future committee meetings; she was flabbergasted to hear that. She wouldn't like to have that happen again. She would also like to go through how Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) are handled in the district.

Peter Grosso said that during any negotiations MOUs should be incorporated into the negotiations and eventual contract. Beth said they should be limited to a specific instance. Deb asked - so can we revisit the process?

Adjournment happened at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Evelyn Rogers Gaudiano

Approved by the School Committee on February 16, 2010

Peter Grosso, Chairperson