

Sudbury Public Schools
Sudbury, Massachusetts
School Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday, February 6, 2008

Present: Susan Iuliano, Chairperson, Jane Santinelli, Vice Chairperson (9:00 p.m.)

Members: Rich Robison, Jeff Beeler, Bill Braun (9:00 p.m.)

Also Present: Dr. John Brackett, Superintendent, Robert Milley, Assistant Superintendent, Mary Will, Director of Business & Finance, Mary Mahoney, SEA
Susan Iuliano called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. in the Silva Room at the Flynn Building. She noted that Jane Santinelli and Bill Braun were attending the joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee, at which the Finance Committee was expected to make its override recommendation of \$1.8 million.

1. Open Forum I

No comments.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORT

4. Bill Schedule

A bill schedule was presented.

5. Donations

VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Rich Robison, to accept a donation of \$50.00 from Leuders Environmental, Inc., received in January 2008. This is an annual donation that the District is free to use as it deems appropriate. The vote was 3-0 in favor.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

6. Recognition

Superintendent Brackett wished to recognize Assistant Superintendent Bob Milley for his contributions to the structure of the ILAP days and organization of the professional development days this year.

Recognition of those Curtis Middle School art students who recently received awards was postponed until the next Committee meeting, as was recognition of Art teachers Scott Greenaway and Ron Darzen.

7. Adoption of the 2008-09 School Calendar

VOTED: On a motion by Rich Robison and seconded by Jeff Beeler, to accept the calendar as presented. The vote was 3-0 in favor.

8. FY08 Budget Report

Mary Will, Director of Business and Finance, highlighted the budget through January 16, 2008. She noted that the expenses deficit anticipated for Central Administration actually represents District-wide expenses and that appropriate adjustments will be made in the FY09 budget. She also noted the need to create a "salaried contracted services" account

from which current SPS employees who provide certain tutoring services can be paid. Currently, the budget provides for such payment through an expense line; however, the Town prohibits the District from using expense categories to make salary payments.

Because the Town has the authority to monitor the budget activities of the District, and because its requirements at times create challenges for Business and Finance, Jeff Beeler asked that Mary Will send him an outline of the areas of challenge so that he can follow up with the Town on behalf of the District.

Additional highlights of the report include significant savings in the Transportation and Utilities categories. Furthermore noted was that accounting for SPED costs is handled differently and some costs are charged against Circuit Breaker funds, therefore the budget does not reflect total SPED costs.

13. Member's Forum I: Assistant Superintendent, Bob Milley described a math program devised for two advanced middle school students, one 7th- and one 8th-grade student, both of whom successfully completed Algebra I in the prior academic year. The students are enrolled in Honors Algebra II and meet four days each week for one hour after school. An L-S math teacher and an on-leave middle school teacher lead the course. The students use their school-day math periods for study and are reported to be doing very well and enjoying the course. Parents are also pleased with this arrangement and it appears to be a more successful option than an on-line accelerated course that was offered to a middle school student several years ago.

Rich Robison confirmed his general availability to meet under a modified schedule of the Budget Review Task Force. Susan Iuliano will step in if he is unavailable. The Board of Selectmen must approve the appointment.

3. School Committee Meeting Schedule Adjustments to the meeting schedule were proposed in order to avoid conflicts with Town-wide events occurring on February 27 (Wayside Big Read Dinner) and March 12 (Candidate's Night). Meetings on those nights will be cancelled and rescheduled for March 5 and March 19.

10. Open Forum II

Michele MacDonald, Old Lancaster Rd, encouraged the Committee to take in the SERF display at the Goodnow Library.

12. Minutes □ Regular Session, January 23, 2008 VOTED: On a motion by Jeff Beeler, seconded by Rich Robison, to accept the minutes of the January 23, 2008 Regular Session as amended. The vote was 3-0 in favor.

2. Revisions to Gifts and Donations Policy
This discussion was postponed.

9. FY09 Budget Update

Representing the School Committee on the Budget Working Group, Jane Santinelli and Bill Braun reported from the concurrently running joint meeting of the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen, at which the Finance Committee made its budget recommendation of a \$1.821 million override. They reported the Finance Committee's concern that voters will not support the \$2.8 million level-staff override endorsed by the School Committee and a failure to pass would be catastrophic for the District. At the request of Jane Santinelli and Bill Braun, and after negotiations, the Board of Selectmen agreed to placing two override questions on the March ballot: the \$2.8 million override and, as a separate question, the \$1.8 million override. The distribution of override funds between the 3 cost centers is proposed to be in the same percentage as prior overrides.

Bill Braun also reported that the Finance Committee is continuing to pursue the idea of capping the annual rate of growth by lowering the rate of rise in salaries. He presented the argument that this puts the District in a position of cutting staff each year.

Bill Braun sought and received confirmation that the Committee would not oppose the \$1.8 million override question, provided the \$2.8 million override also appears as a ballot question and is presented at Town Meeting if needed. Bill Braun will also seek to play a role in structuring the override article for Town Meeting.

Superintendent Brackett presented various override and non-override scenarios. He noted that the \$1.8 million override generates \$1.7 for operations, of which SPS receives \$838,175. The \$2.8 million override generates \$2.7 million for operations, of which SPS receives is \$1,326,743. The difference between the total override and the amount for operations goes to the Town Stabilization Fund and LS Excess & Deficiency Fund.

Dr. Brackett also presented alternatives for non-override reductions. Alternative I involves reductions primarily in teaching staff. Alternative II involves reductions across the entire program. Class size would rise and be comparable in either scenario. Alternative II was submitted to the Finance Committee; however, Dr. Brackett expressed his belief that Alternative I best maintains the integrity of the program as whole. Mary Mahoney stated her belief that teachers would feel undervalued if cuts are made only to teaching staff. She characterized this as a staffing issue, not a union issue, and furthermore believes that parents will not support such reductions in teaching staff. Rich Robison also argued for maintaining the teacher:student ratio that has been a primary consideration in the past. He is concerned with long-term effects if the District's investment in teaching staff is not sustained. Bill Braun does not consider the teacher:student ratio "sacred". Both Susan Iuliano and Jane Santinelli stated that the District's practice in prior years of cutting at the fringes of various programs cannot be sustained; any proposed cuts to such programs would likely result in their elimination. Jeff Beeler stated his preference for cuts in support staff as well as to teaching staff. Dr. Brackett noted the opinion of the SALT Team. The Team prefers keeping the classroom as intact as possible, while recognizing that if supports are removed, there is an increased burden on the classroom dynamic.

The consensus of the Committee is to recognize the unfortunate necessity of making some reductions in the event of a non-override budget, but it prefers to do so in a way that is intermediate of the two alternatives presented. The Superintendent will work with Mary Will to create such a hybrid option that will likely involve cuts to general education teaching assistants and genesis assistants.

The Superintendent ended by highlighting the enrollment at Haynes, which has increased more slowly than at the other elementary schools and is at a size that makes staffing inefficient. This suggests that consideration to redistricting will be necessary.

11. Communications

As outlined in the Communications Packet. Additionally, Susan Iuliano announced the following:

1. A budget forum in Wayland scheduled for February 7;
2. Rep. Tom Conroy's anticipated presence at the March 12 Selectmen's meeting, at which Jeff Beeler and possibly Susan Iuliano will also be present;
3. The March 24 Town budget forum.

13. Member's Forum II

No comments.

14. Executive Session On a motion by Jane Santinelli, seconded by Bill Braun, to adjourn to Executive Session for purposes of discussing negotiations with non-union personnel, not to return to open session. The vote was 5-0 in favor. The time was 11:30 p.m.

Yes Rich Robison

Yes Bill Braun

Yes Susan Iuliano

Yes Jane Santinelli

Yes Jeff Beeler

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito, Recording Secretary