



SPECIAL BOE MEETING MINUTES

October 25, 2010

Central Office

7:00 P.M.

THOSE IN ATTENDANCE: Mr. Bruce Baker, Mrs. Judy Flood, Mr. James Garofolo, Mr. Peter Kubik, Mrs. Jeanne Loda, Mr. Yashu Putorti, Mr. Fred Stanek, Mr. Ed Strumello, Mr. Ward (arrived 7:04 p.m.), Ms. MaryAnne Mascolo, Mr. Rick Belden

The meeting was called to order with the pledge to the flag at 7:02 p.m.

Mr. Strumello introduced Ms. Mascolo who began the meeting by reviewing what we have done in the past and how it works in the district. We ask for a list from the administrators of what they would like to be included in the budget for the upcoming year and shared with the board a copy of what Ms. Feige had submitted. In addition, they ask for rationale for each item they have requested. The rationale will include hard data and prioritized needs. The Central Office team (MaryAnne Mascolo, Christine Syriac, Rick Belden, and Nancy Snopkowski/Mary Lavoie when appropriate) then looks at the rationale and goes back to the administrator to ask if there is something can be reallocated. The Central Office team will make sure the budget needs will meet the state mandated program requirements. All budget requests are cross referenced so that all district needs will be met.

Mr. Belden explained that the administrators have an operating budget for classroom supplies. This data is reviewed periodically. Although Administrators have this in their operating budget, purchase orders are reviewed by Rick, Christine, and MaryAnne before the products are purchased. Health benefits and contractual obligations for personnel are 78% of our budget; instructional supplies are a very small portion of the budget. Instructional supplies line item has been cut three years in a row. Our budget is roughly \$30 million; instructional supplies are 2% of that. Personnel, benefits, utilities, bus fuel, heating are the big items in the budget. Instructional supplies cannot be mandated by teachers because they must be supplied by the district. There was a discussion regarding asking students to purchase workbooks at the high school and MaryAnne committed to look into this.

Judy Flood asked about how close we can come and expressed a concern about starting the process too early. MaryAnne explained that it is a process that is continually evolving and our final budget will not be reviewed until the end of the year. She discussed the possibility of ECS funding being cut this year and not having a final determination until spring of next year. At this point there are no answers. MaryAnne pointed out that we have been losing staff and programs since 2003. Some of the loss is due to the exit of Oxford.

MaryAnne went over the communication survey results and pointed out that 58% of people get their information from their friends. This is a real concern and something that we have some ideas on how to solve. There was some discussion on what timeline we would like to follow for the budget. Ed Strumello indicated that right now we need to come up with the presentation for Wednesday's meeting. MaryAnne's idea for the meeting is to listen to what the parents have to say although Ed feels we need to present some specifics on the budget for the parents to discuss. February 1st is the date that we are giving our budget to the town finance committee has not changed. There is an understanding that there are areas in the budget we present that may change which is unavoidable.

In preparation of the meeting on Wednesday, November 10, 2010 we need to respond to critical statements with "What would be your alternative?" Maybe we need to structure the area of questions. The suggestion was to do some sort of presentation then ask for feedback. Ed suggested structuring the presentation by elementary, middle school, and high school. Bruce Baker suggested we talk about the effect of budget cuts on class sizes. Ask how they felt about last year's process. MaryAnne indicated that 58% did not respond to the question "How would you like to have input into the school district budget process?" It was agreed that the townspeople are interesting in keeping down their personal debt. 153 people stated on the communication survey that they would be interested in receiving information from Seymour Citizens for Education. There was also some discussion on how general the information we present should be. MaryAnne indicated that we are in the point of our budget that if teachers retire, it will not impact the bottom line because of the longevity payments, insurance issues, and the need to replace the retirees. We have to be sure to get the right information out to the public. The announcement of the meeting will be announced on a Connect Ed message from MaryAnne and also posted on the website and Ed requested it be released to the press. All agreed that it will be difficult to send out our information in a format that will be agreeable to all interested groups (parents, townspeople, senior citizens, etc.).

Mr. Stanek wants to add ten (10) instructional days to the calendar and asked Mr. Belden to provide the cost of the additional days.

How do we as a board, communicate to the public and do it as "one voice". We need to develop a story, keep our data short, and be concise in our approach. We need to include how and why education is changing. PTA is a small group of interested parents. How do we get our parents come to a meeting? MaryAnne indicated that 74% on the survey indicated they would like to receive emails from the Superintendent and thought she would send short messages that way. It was agreed that emails, websites, and other avenues of technology such as You Tube videos were good forms of communication. All thought our district website must be improved and made more inviting. MaryAnne talked about how if we had a person to communicate what is going on in the schools it would be very exciting and could impact the vote positively. All agreed that administrators could do more to communicate what is going on in their schools.

MaryAnne suggested the board meet again after our Wednesday, November 10th meeting. She reviewed what the board wanted her to do at the November 10th meeting:

1. We need to tell our story, where we were, where we are, where we are going - not too lengthy
2. Budget packet should be simple, more detailed information available upon request
3. What is our role in the Wednesday meeting? We need to do good listening, not necessarily answer every question.
4. Talk about all day kindergarten
5. Level Services budget - share what this means.
6. Preliminary items that we are discussing
7. Solicit input from elementary parents, then middle school parents, then high school parents
8. Talk about the Link Crew (or similar program) to make the transition from elementary to middle school parents

Any input of what middle school and high school parents might be interested in discussing?

MOTION: (Jeanne Loda/sec., Judy Flood) to adjourn the meeting

SO VOTED

AFFIRMATIVE: Bruce Baker, Judy Flood, James Garofolo, Peter Kubik, Jeanne Loda, Yashu Putorti, Fred Stanek, Ed Strumello Jim Ward,

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Submitted by:
MaryAnne Mascolo