

NEWINGTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 30, 2002

Present: *Budget Committee Members (BUDCOM)*
Alfred Smith (Chairman), Dennis Acton, Leslie Brock, Laura Coleman, Kay Akerley, Wil Gilbert, Terri Spinney

Board of Selectmen Representative (BOS), Jan Stuart

Newington School Principal, Steve Adler
SAU 50 Superintendent, George Cushing
& SAU 50 Business Administrator, Jim Katkin

School Board Members, Mark Beaulier & Helen Maldini

Foster's Democrat Reporter, Michael Goot & (AA), Susan Newcomer

Budget Committee Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. The purpose of the meeting was to review the 2002-2003 Newington School Operating Budget proposal.

Chairman Smith asked that the minutes of January 23, 2002 be read. Leslie Brock made a motion to accept the minutes; seconded by Selectman Stuart. With no questions, motion carried with none opposed.

Newington School Budget Proposal 2002-2003

BUDCOM Chairman Smith asked the committee if they would accept the proposed School Department operating budget of \$1,548,957. BUDCOM member Wil Gilbert made a motion to accept: motion seconded by Stuart.

Chairman Smith asked the BUDCOM if there were any questions.

The introduction letter from Superintendent George Cushing, paragraph 4, referencing warrant articles, was addressed by Chairman Smith. Business Administrator Katkin said the non-capital reserve fund was a warrant article last year and thought it wasn't needed, but would be submitted if requested. Smith said the item was there because it was a requirement of the town and should be reviewed for mistakes. Smith also said the item should be checked as to whether or not it requires a warrant article.

BUDCOM member and representative for the School Board, Terri Spinney, immediately addressed the floor to explain an issue that she knew would be questioned. In regards to the school board's request for a full-time teacher position, Spinney said the position was for one (1) year only.

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Spinney said that, due to the make-up and issues (behavioral and scholastic) of next year's 5th and 6th grade class of 26 students, the school board felt that adding a person for the year would be the most cost-effective solution to the problem. Chairman Smith received a confirmation from Spinney that the 5th and 6th grade would be physically split from each other for one year; a solution that would be least disruptive to the educational issues.

BUDCOM member Kay Akerley mentioned that the 5th and 6th grades have always been together and was concerned that there could still be a problem after the year had passed. Spinney agreed that the classes have always been combined, but there have never been such a large number of students with so many issues. In the following year, enrollment will decrease and issues will be easier to address. Spinney added that they could place several aids in the room, but that option would be more disruptive and less cost effective.

The current issues that place students at different levels were discussed. It was noted that there would be 13 students in each classroom, with the additional classroom possibly being moved to the art room. Chairman Smith said that, although the solution may be the best value for the money, the committee had to make sure it was the best value for the kids, and if it was, then the best had to be done for them.

Spinney, addressing Chairman Smith and all BUDCOM members, said she had carefully evaluated the problem and that student separation was the best financial and educational solution for the year.

Katkin explained the KIDS (Kids in Difficult Situations) program as requested by Kay Akerley. Chairman Smith then explained how preschool early intervention works. There was further discussion regarding special needs programs, and health and nursing, and how all programs fit in to the educational process. Chairman Smith asked Katkin if the line item for psychological counseling should be included with special needs. Katkin explained that the State requires separation of the two lines.

The line item for Professional Growth was discussed. Katkin explained that it was a requirement for teachers, but funds aren't paid out if teachers don't sign up.

Chairman Smith questioned computer department expenses and asked when a computer was last purchased. Spinney said she was trying to come up with a plan that would spread computer needs out over years rather than having a large chunk requested once in awhile. BUDCOM member Coleman asked about the computer instructor and Spinney said the instructor teaches each class and does some repair work. Wil Gilbert noted that the State of Maine was going to "I-Books".

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Selectman Stuart inquired about step raises and a COLA for the secretary, bringing to the table a discussion about not mixing school and town entities. Chairman Smith firmly stated the issues of RSA's and school districts, that there would not be a mix of entities, and that he would clarify the issue with the Selectmen, if needed.

Chairman Smith asked about transportation and field trips. Terri Spinney said there were 4-5 trips per year using the same transportation provider. Support services and insurance: Chairman Smith noted that all insurance providers had increased rates considerably this year, to which Terri Spinney added that the teachers are now contributing 17.5% to their insurance.

Akerley questioned the annuity for a part-time teacher. Spinney said it was given when a teacher (who was not eligible in the retirement system) requested it.

Kitchen renovations will be started in February—as required by State Law—and will be paid with money from the budget and a bond.

Chairman Smith asked Katkin to check on the wording for the warrant article on the transfer of funds to a non-capital reserve fund. It was approved by Smith to have the information submitted at the public hearing and Katkin said he would contact the DRA for assistance.

Smith asked if there were any more comments or questions on the School Board Budget for 2002-2003. BUDCOM member Acton and Smith discussed the formula for education funding—for every \$9 collected, \$6 goes to the State.

With no more questions or comments for the 2002-2003 School Budget proposal, a vote was taken on the motion to accept the School Board Budget in the amount of \$1,548,957, with none opposed.

Chairman Smith thanked the School Board and the SAU for the nice job that was done preparing the budget and also for the services being provided for the money. Smith recognized and commended their efforts.

Smith reminded BUDCOM members that openings for the budget committee were 3 for 3 years, 2 for 2 years, and 1 for 1 year. Akerley and Coleman's terms are up, as is Acton's.

Wil Gilbert made a motion to adjourn the meeting; second by Leslie Brock.
Meeting was adjourned at 8:15.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Newcomer
Administrative Assistant