

A budget workshop session of the Dover School Board was called to order by Chairperson Marjorie Fisher on Monday, March 6, 2006, at 7:05 p.m. in Council Chambers.

**A. ROLL CALL:** Members present were Brandon Foye, Carolyn Mebert, Dorothea Hooper, Audra Lurvey, Marjorie Fisher, Kara Winton, and Doris Grady.

Also present were Superintendent John O'Connor; Business Manager, Laurie Verville; Dover School District teachers, staff, and administrators; Parents of Dover School Students; Dover Citizens; and Jeremiah Rood, *Foster's*.

**B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The entire Board led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**C. CITIZEN'S FORUM:**

Prior to the start of Citizen's Forum, Chairperson Marjorie Fisher announced there would be no proposed cuts to paraeducators working in kindergarten classrooms.

Pam Priester Co-President, Garrison School PTA, Chrissy Rose, Co-President, Woodman Park School PTA, and Dana Boudreau, President, Horne Street School PTA, addressed the Board as a group. Mr. Boudreau stated that all three PTA/PTO groups had common concerns. Specifically, cuts that affect core programs or class sizes. He stated all realized that no final decisions have yet been made, and that the parent groups will support the School Board to bring forward to the City Council whatever budget amount they feel is necessary (even above 3%) for the quality education of Dovers' students. He also stated the parents "will be there" for support at the City Council Budget meetings. Another area of concern to the parents would be cuts in Behavior Specialist or Guidance positions. He noted the importance of these positions play in our schools. They allow teachers and aides to conduct classes without interruption. He stated that 40 Horne Street School children (10%) are currently on day-to-day behavior plans utilizing these specialists.

Fran Meffen, Dover Middle School Guidance Counselor, spoke in favor of retaining the elementary Guidance and Behavior Intervention Specialist positions. She stated the national standard recommends a 1 to 500 Guidance Counselor to student ratio. Additionally, she spoke in favor of retaining all secretarial positions as they are an integral part of providing student services, noting that the schools are very data driven in decision making as a result of the NCLB requirements. Ms. Meffen then spoke to the elimination of a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teaching position, noting that the class sizes would be larger than is desirable at 27 to 28 students per class. Lastly, Ms. Meffen asked the Board to reconsider reinstating the previously cut Curriculum Director position. She stated she felt this district-level position was necessary in order to support the 5-year review cycle of the Dover Schools' curriculum.

Elizabeth Dubois, Woodman Park School Teacher, agreed with Ms. Meffen's remarks and stated that every position mentioned that was cut would affect students. She added that Behavior Specialists and Guidance Counselors are not "extras" in our schools and gave concrete examples of how these professionals assisted in her classroom.

Roger Hayden, 4 Lexington Street, stated he supported the PTO leaders and the School Board in its fight for tax dollars. He added his belief that a "town isn't good unless the schools are good." He ended by stating Dover needs to maintain excellent schools.

Laurie Relinski, 131 Mast Road, spoke in support of Behavior Specialist and Guidance Counselor positions in our elementary schools. She noted that Behavior Specialists are able to work with the one disruptive student who would cause NO students to learn.

Jennifer Beams, Mt. Vernon Street, asked the Board to reconsider cutting a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher position. Class sizes of 26+ would make it difficult to meet all students needs. "Shouldn't non-academic items be cut first?"

Julie Guyette, Brookline Avenue, parent of a Woodman Park student diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, stated that the Behavior Specialist allows her son, and the increasing numbers of children with this syndrome, to be successful in their classrooms.

Woodman Park School Teachers Sharon Shea and Jackie Tromba addressed the Literacy Collaborative Program at Woodman Park School. Ms. Tromba reported that they are able to provide on-going professional development for the school's staff. Training is conducted after school every 2 weeks and in-classroom coaching is available on a daily basis. Annually, a school evaluation and report is prepared. This is a federally funded program to which the school has made a 5 year commitment. Ms. Shea added that 24 teachers have taken over 30 hours of training so far. The teachers are interested; the framework has helped them to become better educators; they provide on-site and on-going professional development through coaching. She ended by inviting all to come to the classrooms or training sessions at Woodman Park School.

Maybeth Anderson, Dover High School Librarian, asked the Board to consider reinstating cuts made to the library book, magazine, and video collections because they need to be kept up-to-date. New topics and current items of controversy must be made available to the students.

Bill Hunt, Dover Middle School 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, also asked the Board to consider reinstating a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher position, citing the teacher to student ratios that would occur as a result of the cut.

Nelson Stenson, 723 Martha's Way, parent of a Woodman Park student, spoke in support of the Behavior Specialist and Guidance positions. He reiterated the belief that if one student in a class is disruptive, none of the students in the class can get any work done.

Dana Lynch, 72 County Farm Road, spoke as a "community advocate" stating his belief that the education of children is vital to the health of this community. "Adequate is not good enough. We need excellence."

**D. BUDGET DISCUSSION:** Superintendent O'Connor provided the following recap information:

- The 2005/2006 budget, not including debt service, represented \$34,363,074.

- The original proposed fiscal year 2007 budget submitted by the Superintendent was for \$37,530,011, a 9.66% increase.
- The fiscal year 2007 budget today, removing all approved Board cuts made during the previous three meetings, is at \$35,584,650, a 3.55% increase over last year's budget.
- The targeted 3% increase of the current budget would be a budget of \$35,393,966.
- To reach that goal, \$190,684. remains to be cut from the budget.

Doris Grady requested no more cuts be made to the budget. Looking at the list of items cut to date, there is currently a \$.25 increase on the tax rate at this point. "I in no way intend to look at cutting another \$190,000 from the budget to reach 3%." "Neither am I really in favor of looking at, and this is just personal so, maybe rather than deal with some more cutting, the paper that you gave us said that if we went to 3.5%, we'd have to cut \$18,000. Personally, I'd like to look at the figures presently between 3 ¾% and 4% increase in order to make our system to remain the way it is and possibly a bit better. The Council will determine whether or not they'll give us the 4% or 3 ½%, and once they've allotted us that money, these cuts are not in ice. They're not solid. That means that is money that will be given to our Superintendent and with that amount of money, he runs or system to the very best way he possible can."

Dorothea Hooper agreed with Ms. Grady and said that she was not interested in getting to a percentage. "The City Council has the job of providing city services and keeping taxes at a reasonable level and they're trying to do their job. Our job as a School Board is to provide quality education for kids; who don't vote. So, we have to do it for them." "Not only am I not interested in cutting to 3%, I'd like to go back and look at the grade 6 teacher at the Dover Middle School and any area where class sizes are beyond reasonable."

Carolyn Mebert stated she had two recommendations. The first was, last week, the Athletic Travel budget was discussed. At \$84,200, that is up over 17% from what it was last year. Ms. Mebert recommended level funding this line item at \$71,832. She also recommended reinstating the 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher position.

Carolyn Mebert moved, Aurda Lurvey seconded a motion to cut the recommended Athletic Travel budget down to its current level of \$71,832. At the Chairperson's request, Peter Wotton spoke to how this cut would affect his athletic programs and after a brief discussion, an oral **VOTE FAILED 2/5**.

Ms. Fisher recommended the athletic travel budget be cut by \$10,000, giving them \$3,000 more to help with the increase in gas prices. Carolyn Mebert moved, Kara Winton seconded, to cut \$10,000 from the Athletic Transportation budget. An oral **VOTE FAILED 3/4**.

Carolyn Mebert moved, Dorothea Hooper seconded, to reinstate a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teaching position at Dover Middle School. An oral **VOTE PASSED 7/0**.

Ms. Grady stated she was "...having difficulty with cutting ROTC for several reasons. It's a number of students that we take care of, and we take care of whatever their needs are. We have an Alt school that we built a new building for. It cost us about \$300,000 to

service about 25 to 29 kids. And yet, we're not willing to take care of a class that we have that's presently in the 60's with some eighth graders looking at coming up. If we can spend that kind of money to take care of other student's needs, I don't know why we can't spend some money and take care of the needs of the kids who enjoy ROTC and have told us it has been beneficial to them." Ms. Fisher agreed with Ms. Grady stating that Mr. George had previously indicated his belief that there was no other program that would benefit those 50 or students as much as the ROTC.

Ms. Grady stated , "I still have difficulty, at the high school, in order to maintain at our technical school, we have combined class after class after class just in order to keep that position there." "When we have ROTC, those kids who are in there have an opportunity to go to college for free. They have a better opportunity to get into the Naval College. They have an opportunity there that we don't have anywhere else in our system." Ms. Grady then recited some of the courses that were combined in order to keep the position in the Career Technical Center and stated she had trouble saying that was okay. "If we can do this for these kids, I strongly believe we can do it for the others. For that, I'd go to Council and ask for 4% to take care of all of the kids rather than sit back and drop it."

Doris Grady moved, Audra Lurvey seconded, a motion to reinstate the ROTC program. An oral **VOTE FAILED 3/4.**

There was discussion about administrative staff taking on the curriculum duties for one year. Dr. O'Connor stated this was a critical position for the district. Ms. Fisher asked if it would be helpful to reinstate the position for 1/2 year or if it would be necessary to fill the position for the entire year. The Superintendent explained he would attempt to replace the position in mid-year (February) and in the meantime, other administrative staff would pick up some of the duties until the position was filled. Ms. Grady stated her opinion it was "ridiculous" to bring in a person for 1/2 year. "Either do it full year or don't do it. To bring somebody in in the middle of the year, it takes them the other half of the year to get used to the system." Ms. Winton stated bringing someone in January would give them time to acclimate themselves and continue on in the future year's budget. Ms. Hooper added her experience has shown it could take that long to hire someone to fill the position. Ms. Lurvey asked if the lack of a Curriculum Director would impact starting the new curriculums next year. The Superintendent stated the current administrative staff would pick up those responsibilities.

Kara Winton moved, Audra Lurvey seconded, to reinstate the Curriculum Director to the initial request of half time. An oral **VOTE PASSED 5/2.**

Ms. Mebert stated the current budget reflects a 3.93% increase over the previous year's budget after adding back \$69,940 for a grade 6 teacher and \$60,000 for one half of a director position. Carolyn Mebert moved, Audra Lurvey seconded, to stop the budget process at \$35,712,395. An oral **VOTE PASSED 7/0.**

The Superintendent discussed the remainder of the budget process from School Board approval, City Council submission, public hearings, and City Council approval.

**E: ADJOURNMENT:** Doris Grady moved, Audra Lurvey seconded, to adjourn the budget session at 9:15 p.m. An oral **VOTE PASSED 7/0.**

Budget Workshop Session #4  
March 6, 2006  
Dover School Board  
Dover, New Hampshire 03820  
Page 5

Respectfully submitted,

KARA WINTON, Secretary  
Dover School Board  
KW/kgb  
3/7/06