

A workshop session of the Dover School Board was called to order by Chairperson Marjorie Fisher on Monday, February 19, 2007, at 6:30 p.m. in Council Chambers for the purpose of discussing the Superintendent's proposed fiscal year 2008 budget.

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

Also present were Superintendent John O'Connor; Business Manager, Laurie Verville; Garrison School Principal, Dustin Gray; Woodman Park School Principal, Patrick Boodey; Dover High School Principal, Christopher George; Horne Street School Principal, Barbara Szabunka; Curriculum, Assessment, & Instruction Director, Jean Briggs; Joanne Eaton, Facilities and Operations Manager; and Larry Clow, *Foster's*.

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

C. CITIZEN'S FORUM: No one addressed the Board.

D. BUDGET DISCUSSION: The Superintendent reviewed ROTC enrollments for the fall and spring of 2006/2007. In the fall, there were 62 students enrolled. In the spring, the number reduced to 58 students. Dr. O'Connor also shared with the Board a letter he received from the manager of the NJROTC Program for the Department of the Navy, J. D. Smith, Ph.D. The letter dated 7 February 2007 indicates Dover High School is below the minimum enrollment of 100 students (or 10% of the students enrolled in the school) and, therefore, the NJROTC Program is placed on probation. The Superintendent also reported, the two current ROTC instructors have advised they will be resigning at the end of this school year.

Dorothea Hooper stated she originally voted for the JROTC Program but, "despite all of the good things the program has provided for the students who are enrolled, ...and if we had a million dollars, I'd say, let's do a program individually for every kid in the school district but we don't have it. And, we knocked out a world language program last year and kept JROTC. That program would have serviced 250 kids, and JROTC is still down 58-60, in that area. I think the interest is just not there. Therefore, I think it's an expensive program to keep in operation for so few students."

Ms. Mebert asked how much the NJROTC program costs the district. Dr. O'Connor stated there would be an approximate savings of \$65,000 if the program were cut.

Ms. Grady asked if the \$36 Million figure shown under Contractual Obligations (in the Superintendent's proposed budget) included the \$288,648 in new staff. Ms. Verville stated new staff was included in that figure. Ms. Grady continued, "Therefore we already have in our budget \$289,000 for new staff, and we're willing to drop a program that takes care of 60 kids for about \$60,000. Personally, that \$288,000, I'd like to see set aside, no new staff, until such time as we've covered the budget and then determine how much of the new staff we can take care of." Ms. Grady also noted the district received a similar letter from the NJROTC Manager last year, yet the program was not cut by the Navy. Ms. Grady then asked the Superintendent to provide the numbers of students who are enrolled in the new drumming and guitar classes. "I think ROTC matches those two programs as well as anything. I think we're looking at cutting \$63,000 but we're going to add \$289,000 of new staff." Dr. O'Connor stated he would provide enrollment numbers for guitar and drum classes but cautioned, unlike ROTC, those classes do

not require a full-time staff member to teach. Those are just one of many different types of classes that make up a full-time schedule. Ms. Grady also shared concerns about the numbers of students that will enter the freshman class next year. Dr. O'Connor stated 8th grade enrollments from Dover and Barrington are down while Nottingham numbers have remained pretty steady over the past five years.

Dr. O'Connor shared recommended cuts to be applied to his 2007-2008 proposed budget: These include cutting NJROTC (\$63,231.31) and eliminating a math position previously requested by Mr. George (\$73,184.21). Mr. George believes he will be able to staff the math department to meet the needs of the students with the current staffing levels. There was a question last meeting about some "new equipment" for the SAU office relocation. That item is being withdrawn and will be funded as a part of retrofit monies instead of the local budget (\$4,459.00). Lastly, Human Resources estimates a \$5,036.33 savings after the new DAA contract is negotiated, and the SPED director reported a \$15,500 deduction from the Alternative School transfer fund. These cuts total \$161,410.85, an approximate ½% budget decrease, if they were to be approved by the Board.

Dorothea Hooper asked Principal George if the new staff he requested was for new classes or to reduce existing classroom sizes. Mr. George explained these positions, which he reviewed with the Board during the last meeting, were to reduce existing class sizes. Dover High School currently does not meet state certification requirements for class size below 30 in many cases. Ms. Fisher asked Mr. George if he could recommend any classes at Dover High School for elimination. Mr. George stated he always looks at how many students are served by the programs with a single teacher and, "in terms of how many students are met, if you look at the two teachers in the ROTC program, ...if you're asking me which ones I could live without, even though those are very positive for our kids, that the single program that meets fewer kids with those two teachers than any other program." Ms. Fisher asked where he thought the students who would be displaced (if JROTC were cut) would enroll. Mr. George suggested they might choose Career Technical Center courses, exploring programs with CTC, others might include music or art electives, or some options in senior English electives being offered next year.

Dr. O'Connor went on to state, there is less than 5% of the budget that does not fall under some sort of contractual obligation (including the cost of new positions). Therefore, the Board will be looking at items such as supplies, maintenance, curriculum, and equipment – maintenance and athletic, to question and decide whether to include them. Ms. Fisher asked if the Superintendent could level fund the budget, eliminating new positions, and work forward to reach the desired percentage increase. Dr. O'Connor asked Ms. Fisher to confirm that she wanted to look at a list of what constituted the \$2,046,552, and go back to level funding. He cautioned that logic would seem the figure would be lower, but, it might not be lower because he has already cut some things and added some items.

Ms. Grady asked the Business Manager to define Regular Programs, a \$1.5 million increase. Ms. Verville stated that included everything under the 1100 instruction function.

Ms. Grady questioned why the Guidance line item had increased by \$111,000. Ms. Verville noted there is a guidance position that was fully grant funded at Dover High School. Each year, over the past seven years, the funding was reduced, and this year's budget will now take over the full cost of the position. Ms. Verville noted this amount included FICA, medical, and benefits..

Ms. Hooper questioned why Attendance/Social Work increased 394.52% and asked if that included the request for a new secretary position at the middle school. Dr. O'Connor stated it did. Ms. Hooper asked what was the Social Work piece. Ms. Verville stated that was for the Truant Officer's salary and benefits.

Ms. Grady questioned if the McConnell Center was included in the \$179,319 debt service increase. Ms. Verville stated the McConnell Center debt was not included in the budget at all – rather, this was the debt for all other construction projects. Dr. O'Connor stated the McConnell Center debt would “increase the bottom line.”

Ms. Mebert asked for an explanation of the 202.36% increase in equipment/new/replacement. She asked what other items, besides surveillance cameras, are included in this line item. Ms. Verville stated it included facilities equipment (floor scrubbers, vacuum cleaners, a maintenance vehicle replacement, burnishers) as well as some athletic equipment, technology equipment, and upgrades for computers. Ms. Fisher questioned why the district was purchasing a new vehicle. Ms. Verville stated it was to replace an older truck that no longer passes inspection. Ms. Fisher asked if the truck couldn't be repaired and whether the vehicle needed to be replaced this year. Ms. Eaton noted that maintenance vehicle breakdowns have been on the rise. Dr. O'Connor referred to page 88 in the budget – Purchase/Lease Truck line item. Ms. Fisher noted was showing a 0% increase. Ms. Verville stated she was correct, the district bought a new vehicle this past year and the item is level funded to purchase an additional vehicle in fiscal year 2008. Therefore, it is NOT part of the 202.36% increase. Ms. Fisher restated she would rather see that \$15,000 spent on children's programs and she would address this item later in the budget process.

Ms. Mebert asked for an explanation for the 995.43% increase shown on page 88 for Fleet Service Maintenance. Ms. Verville explained that Ms. Eaton made arrangements with the City Fleet Services to maintain all power equipment, mowers, and other power equipment. Dr. O'Connor noted the bottom of page 87, a \$10,000 deduction was made in Repair line items, essentially shifting over to the new line item for City Fleet Services, because this costs less than going out to local dealerships. Ms. Mebert stated, “It basically evens out. We're not really showing a 995% increase on these particular types of items.” Dr. O'Connor agreed; we shifted from other accounts to this one.

Ms. Grady noted, “We're showing a \$213,000 increase in Operation and Maintenance of Plant. Maybe that's something we should investigate and look at. It's a pretty big increase in one year. Looks like it's becoming pretty costly (for maintenance of our grounds and facilities). I think we should look at if there are any other ways that can show a decrease.” Dr. O'Connor reminded that a tour of district schools had been held last Sunday and members of the City Council remarked about the poor quality of the maintenance and upkeep of the buildings. He added that historically, cuts have been made in this area and that he had attempted to look at upgrading maintenance equipment in this budget. Dr. O'Connor stated he would break out all of the figures for next meeting.

Ms. Grady also noted for the public, that medical benefits and New Hampshire State Retirement increases alone are significant but there is nothing the Board can do about them. “Those are two big items that we have to deal with.”

Ms. Fisher asked why Professional Service, Audits increased 22.74%. Ms. Verville stated that during a recent audit, it was recommended student activity account audits be conducted on a regular basis. Several schools will be audited one year and alternate schools in following years. Ms. Fisher then asked why Snow Removal showed a 29.41% increase when we have been experiencing a relatively mild winter. Ms. Verville explained the increase is to cover additional parking areas at Garrison and Horne and gas price increases. Ms. Fisher again noted we did not use the money budgeted this year and asked why the item was showing an increase for next year. Ms. Verville stated we had been lucky so far this year, but she reviewed history of snow removal budgets to come up with a "happy medium."

Ms. Hooper noted the Officials line item increased by 18.15% and asked if those were athletic officials. Dr. O'Connor stated they were and their rates of pay are set by the NHIAA.

Ms. Mebert asked for a definition of Medical Reimbursement. Dr. O'Connor stated some personnel contracts offer a payback to those not participating in the health care system because it is a savings to the district.

Ms. Grady asked for an explanation for a decrease in Public Tuition of 82.78%. Ms. Verville stated that was for Special Education students being placed in schools other than the district's but historically, most of those placements were not to public schools; most are to private placements.

Ms. Fisher questioned a 67.91% increase in Supplies-Maintenance. "I wish we could put that money into the teachers and programs rather than supplies. That's why I would like to see it level funded and then add what we think we needed." Ms. Fisher asked if she could get a breakout of all of the supplies so she could see how much is being spent on curriculum, maintenance, instruction, etc. Dr. O'Connor stated he would separate all supplies and provide a list for Board members by the next meeting.

Ms. Fisher and Ms. Hooper asked if students pay for lost or broken textbooks. Dr. O'Connor stated diplomas and grades are held until students submit all fees owed. "We do our very best at the high school and the middle school to look at lost books. But, also keep in mind, if you've been using a textbook for five and six years, there are books that are just wearing out from use. You can't necessarily charge a student who in the fifth year you've handed a book that you've duct taped holding the cover on and then expect that student to pay for the book at the end of the year." Ms. Lurvey also noted that all library supplies had been cut from the budget and may be being absorbed by the schools supply accounts.

Ms. Grady brought up the complaints she has heard about overcrowding at Dover High School. She referenced the Dover High School 2010 Committee and read from Policy JCAA:

"The Superintendent and staff shall carefully monitor the present and future forecasted population of full time students at Dover High School. The population of Dover High School shall not exceed the totals of full time students listed below."

She then stated, "We either have to rescind the policy, if we let our numbers keep crawling up. In looking at 592 seats, and we're 110 over, there are supposed to be vacancies that we distribute to Barrington and Nottingham. In 2007, the anticipated (number of Dover students)

was 1144...that is why I wondered what it looked like we had for Dover students coming in to the high school. I know there's money coming in but there has to be a cost or a crowding of classes for getting too many kids into the building. I'd just like to look at those figures when you get them together." Dr. O'Connor stated he would provide the numbers for Barrington, Nottingham, and Dover by the next meeting. He also reminded that fewer students are dropping out of high school so the numbers are up somewhat and stated if the Board wanted to hold to the numbers in Policy JCAA, he needed to know soon in order to notify Barrington that a potential 50 to 75 students cannot attend Dover High School next year. He added that, with that is a corresponding loss of revenue, which next year, could be approximately \$9,750 per student. Audra Lurvey asked how staffing would be affected if the Board were to limit incoming students. Dr. O'Connor stated if there were 50 less students, it would not impact staff. If it were 100 less students, he was not certain it would affect the staff. Those numbers are distributed equitably over four grades. Losing twenty-five students per grade would not necessarily eliminate any staff.

Ms. Mebert asked if anticipated costs for busing are included in the proposed budget if the Board implements redistricting for next year. The Superintendent stated the proposed budget contains a 2-½% increase over current transportation costs as an estimate. However, the current busing contract expires in June. A busing RFP is due in the Superintendent's on February 20th. If all five vendors who attended the pre-bidders meeting submit quotes, the SAU is hoping to see a decrease in the estimated amount. He added that bidders have been asked to submit two bids – one just as kindergarten is conducted today and another for full-day kindergarten without the midday runs.

Ms. Grady asked if Yearbook would be a credit course at the high school next year. Dr. O'Connor stated it would be. Ms. Grady then asked about the Robotic Teaching Module – "Does that mean our kids can finally get into that robotic competition that everybody else gets into that we've been trying to get into for ten years? I see all these other high schools get involved in that robotic competition and Dover High sits there, and we've got a lot of money we're spending, so I just wondered if..."

Ms. Hooper asked if Professional Development and supplies and books needed by those that have gone through the DEIP process is included in the budget. Dr. O'Connor stated it was, included under different curriculum lines.

Ms. Hooper stated, "I have to say I'm having a little bit of a problem getting my mind wrapped around the fact that we're sitting here, picking apart piece by piece and trying to find places to save, which is indeed our job, but at the same time we're thinking about creating new programs such as all-day kindergarten. It just doesn't seem to jive for me." Ms. Grady added, "We're spending a lot of time looking at, this figures high, that figures high...but we've got these two big unknowns. Kindergarten full day and the busing and it puts us in a spot to come up with a final figure to bring to the Council." Ms. Fisher asked when the bus bids would be available. Ms. Verville stated they are due tomorrow (February 20, 2007) and she hoped to have a report to the Board by the end of the week. Dr. O'Connor stated he would get the information to them before the weekend for their review prior to the next meeting, Monday, February 26th.

Ms. Grady asked the Superintendent to provide lists – "absolute necessities," a "half-wish list," and an "extras list." She noted that helped her last year during the budget process. Dr. O'Connor stated his original presentation basically did that. He had presented a list of staff that

administrators requested but he did not recommend and he also included those additional staff the Superintendent did recommend. Ms. Fisher asked the Superintendent to “lay it out, side-by-side,” to make it easier for the Board to review. Dr. O’Connor stated he would make a comparison of what administrators requested against what the Superintendent recommended for new staff to be included in the budget. Ms. Grady stated they already had that information but she is looking for a list developed by the Superintendent and administrators of those things they “must have” compared to “want haves.” Dr. O’Connor stated that was provided last year in response to a recommended percentage the Board provided. He asked for Board direction for this year’s budget.

Ms. Fisher asked for a 3% and 4% increase list. Superintendent O’Connor stated that a 3% list would include a list of current staff that would need to be cut. Ms. Fisher agreed and asked the Superintendent to provide a 4% budget with a list of prioritized recommended eliminations. Ms. Grady asked for an additional 5% budget. Dr. O’Connor stated he would prepare a 4% increase budget and then the Board could add items back in to reach the desired increase.

Ms. Hooper noted that each year, the Career Tech comes before the Board asking for waivers to hold courses with 11 or less students enrolled. She wondered if there were any courses in danger “at this point” that might help the Board in the budget process. Dr. O’Connor stated he had submitted a request for a waiver to the Commissioner of Education to eliminate the Forestry and Environmental Science Program and the Floriculture/Aquaculture/Horticulture Program. This would be equivalent to approximately 1 FTE in terms of staffing. The Tri-City Agreement requires teachers receive a year’s notice of termination of any class. That was done last November. The Commissioner’s office has requested additional information and the Superintendent is working on preparing that for submission. He stated he would keep the Board apprised.

Doris Grady added that there is one more item that greatly affects this year’s budget preparation. The Adequate Education Grant provided by the State has been reduced by \$250,000 less than last year. Medical, retirement, and adequacy grants are the three big issues for the Board.

Dr. O’Connor asked the Board to approve the deletion of the following items from the Budget:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Notes/Comments</u>
SAU Furniture	\$4,459.00	Moved to Capital Project at McConnell Ctr
DAA Contract – T’A’d	\$5,036.33	Net Savings for Pending DAA Agreement
Math Teacher @ DHS	\$73,184.21	Restructure Staffing
Alt School Transfer	<u>\$15,500.00</u>	Decreased Overall Appropriation
Total	\$98,179.54	

Audra Lurvey moved, Dorothea Hooper seconded, those items totaling \$98,179.54 be deleted from the budget. An oral **VOTE PASSED 7/0**.

Dr. O’Connor clarified actions he would be taking as a result of this evening’s meeting:

- Bring in a 4% budget
- Provide a prioritized list of items deleted to achieve the 4% budget
- Transportation RFP Results
- Projected Dover, Barrington, and Nottingham Enrollments

- Separate Supply Accounts by Category
- Side-by-Side Comparison of Administrator's New Staff Requests to Superintendent New Staff Requests
- Vehicle Replacement Clarification
- Drumming and Guitar Enrollments

E: ADJOURNMENT: Audra Lurvey moved, Dorothea Hooper seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 p.m. An oral **VOTE PASSED 7/0.**

Respectfully submitted,

BRANDON FOYE, Secretary
Dover School Board
BF/kgb
2/20/07