

A workshop session of the Dover School Board was called to order by Vice Chairperson, Audra Lurvey, on Monday, February 26, 2007, at 6:35 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, Beth Setear, and Doris Grady. Absent was Marjorie Fisher.

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; Curriculum, Assessment, & Instruction Director, Jean Briggs; Director of Special Education, Jaclyn Adams; Athletic Director, Peter Wotton; Career Technical Center Director, James Stopa; and Jeremiah Rood, *Fosters*.

**B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Beth Setear led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

**D. BUDGET DISCUSSION:** The Superintendent reminded the Board that they approved \$98,179 in budget cuts at the last budget workshop. He also reported on three items for which Board members requested more information during the last budget workshop and stated that responses were already mailed to Board members during the previous week:

- The line item for a maintenance vehicle in the amount of \$15,000 is to replace either a 1984 John Deere Tractor or a 1995 Cargo Van, both of which are in very poor condition.
- A review of enrollment projections for Dover High School
- An explanation for budget increases in the Facilities and Operations portion of the budget

Dr. O'Connor stated he heard the Board request him to bring forward a 4% budget for this evening's workshop. The Superintendent's original proposed budget, less debt service, was for \$38,525,040. Cuts approved during the 2/19/07 workshop reduced the budget by \$98,179 to \$38,426,861. The Superintendent, in consultation with administrators, prepared a proposed list of cuts for this evening's meeting (\$529,617) which, if approved, would decrease the budget to \$37, 897,244 or a percentage increase of 4.68% over last year's budget. Additionally, a list of four "potential" cuts in the amount of \$141,187.02 had been prepared which, if approved, would further reduce the percentage increase to the budget to 4.2%.

**Dr. O'Connor then reviewed the following recommendations for items to be cut from the 2007-2008 proposed budget:**

<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Notes/Comments</u>
Remaining New Personnel Requests	\$215,464.19	
Anticipated Savings from Transportation Bid	\$35,000.00	
Eliminate 1 entry-level elementary teacher	\$49,828.27	Move Literacy Collaborative Coach to classroom @ WPS
Eliminate 1 Custodial Position	\$52,855.79	Reduction in force
New/Addt'l Equipment Special Ed	\$4,700.00	Moved to IDEA grant
Eliminate 1 entry-level elementary teacher	\$49,828.27	Reduction in force (Based on current enrollments)

**The remaining recommendations either level fund, reduce, or eliminate various line items:**

Sped Supply Testing/Scoring	\$2,000.00
Science supplies-High School	\$3,000.00

A/V Replace Equipment-High School	\$1,450.00
Dues and Fees-High School	\$100.00
Staff Travel-High School	\$500.00
Library Books-High School	\$1,900.00
Library Reference Books-High School	\$700.00
Staff Development - Physical Ed DHS	\$800.00
Repairs Equipment - DMS	\$500.00
Repairs Band- DMS	\$500.00
Repairs Equipment Music - DHS	\$250.00
Travel Island Program - DHS	\$1,000.00
Repairs Agriculture - RCTC	\$1,200.00
Repairs Business - RCTC	\$1,000.00
Repairs Tech Prep - RCTC	\$800.00
Repairs Automotive - RCTC	\$750.00
Repairs Autobody - RCTC	\$500.00
Repairs Engineering Technology - RCTC	\$600.00
Lease/Purchase Vehicle - RCTC	\$12,000.00
Supplies Agriculture - RCTC	\$863.00
Books Text Business	\$2,000.00
Books Text Family/Consumer Science	\$250.00
New/Add'l Equipment - RCTC	\$10,000.00
New/Add'l Tech Equipment - RCTC	\$5,000.00
Staff Development Coaches - DHS	\$500.00
Replace Equipment Athletics - DMS	\$3,500.00
Replace Equipment Athletics - DHS	\$4,800.00
Replace Equipment Baseball - DHS	\$300.00
Replace Equipment Basketball - DHS	\$3,050.00
Replace Equipment Field Hockey - DHS	\$7,100.00
Replace Equipment Football - DHS	\$4,500.00
Replace Equipment Golf - DHS	\$960.00
Replace Equipment Softball - DHS	\$300.00
Books Text Replacement - GES	\$4,000.00
Books Text Replacement - HSS	\$4,000.00
Books Text Replacement - WPS	\$4,000.00
Books Text Replacement - DMS	\$4,000.00
Books Text Replacement - DHS	\$6,000.00
New/Add'l Equipment - DHS	\$5,000.00
New/Add'l Equipment Social Studies - DHS	\$1,587.88
New/Add'l Equipment Music - DHS	\$2,000.00
New/Add'l Furniture Art - DHS	\$300.00
New/Add'l Furniture Music - DHS	\$1,400.00
Replace Equipment - DHS	\$3,000.00
Replace/Repair Equipment Lang. Arts - DHS	\$600.00
Replace Equipment Science - DHS	\$380.00
Replace Equipment Music - DHS	\$3,500.00
Supplies Principal Office - DMS	\$1,500.00
Repairs Carpentry - DHS	\$3,000.00
Repairs HVAC - DHS	\$5,000.00
<i>Total:</i>	\$529,617.40

Discussion:

Item 1 on the list for \$215,464 are the 5 new positions requested previously (.5 art teacher, business ed teacher, and English teacher at DHS, 2 Lacrosse coaches, and an increase in a secretarial position at DMS).

Item 2: Anticipated savings from the Transportation bids recently opened are at \$35,000. However, there are questions to be clarified on these bids. Ms. Grady agreed some of the figures shown on the transportation RFP spread sheets are very confusing. She added that the bids for Smart Start busing, which she was not aware were being provided, are \$5,400, \$9,900 and \$36,900 - "Those figures were way off." Dr. O'Connor agreed, "We need to talk with the vendors to make sure they all have an equal understanding of what the requirements were." He asked Board members to wait for the SAU to review the bids with vendors for clarifications which he will bring back to the Board with a recommendation to the Board for one of the vendors at the March 12<sup>th</sup> meeting. The \$35,000 is a minimum anticipated savings at this time.

Item 3: Eliminating an entry-level elementary teacher which would mean moving an existing Literacy Collaborative Coach at Woodman Park School back into a regular classroom.

Item 4: Eliminate a custodial position. Ms. Lurvey questioned whether this would be wise in light of the fact we have increased building capacities. Dr. O'Connor stated "it will be a stretch, we know that, trying to come up with a 4% budget, we've had to look at a variety of positions across the district."

Ms. Hooper asked if the English Teacher being cut was to cover new courses or to reduce class size. Mr. O'Connor stated it would be both, but primarily to reduce class size. Ms. Hooper noted these cuts affect curriculum instruction. She added the business and art teachers would also affect class sizes. Mr. George agreed. He added there are an additional 50 students signed up for classes in grades 10 through 12. Those students, along with the overcrowded classes this year, and the addition of senior electives, the numbers will increase. Ms. Hooper asked if overcrowding wouldn't affect the evaluation process of the High School. Mr. George agreed it absolutely would and one of the needs the accreditation committee has already cited is overcrowding at the school.

Brandon Foye stated Mr. George made compelling arguments for all of these positions at the previous workshops. He asked the status of the Girls' Lacrosse program. Mr. Wotton stated there was a program of 50 to 55 girls. Currently, there are 14 girls' varsity and 13 boys' varsity programs at the school. However, the coach positions for girls' Lacrosse and one in gymnastics are not paid for. This is a potential Title IX issue.

Ms. Grady reiterated her concerns about overcrowding at the high school. She believes we need to review the tuition students. "Our class sizes are larger and that means we have to look at how many tuition seats we have if it means that's part of the reason for the classes being overcrowded. From the studies we've done before, that was the issue." "Our numbers have remained about the same as they've been for ten years throughout the city and I think every year we've added new staff. Do you have a record of how many new staff we've added each year?" The Superintendent stated he did not have a definitive answer but stated he could look at that. Ms. Grady said, "No. I can look through my papers. But we've added every year and whenever a need has come up I think the Board's said, 'take care of that position and put a new staff member in,' so we've added even after the budget and that's

why I had trouble looking at the figure originally, \$289,000, I think it's just something we need to look at."

Ms. Hooper stated the 2010 Committee talked about the possibility of holding back tuition students, but when she was told how much money is lost for every student we failed to take in for that program she felt, "We have to be very careful when we talk about that, because we don't want to kill what little revenue we have outside of the taxpayers money."

The remaining items were non-personnel cuts dealing with supplies, maintenance and equipment.

**Dr. O'Connor then recommended the following items for consideration and suggested the Board decide on them during the March 5<sup>th</sup> workshop:**

<b>POTENTIAL CUTS FOR DISCUSSION AT 2/26/07 BUDGET WORKSHOP</b>	
ROTC Staff	\$63,231.31
RCTC Special Needs Coordinator to .5	\$37,775.00
RCTC Voc Assessor to .5	\$34,554.00
9 Clubs at High School Level	\$5,626.71
<i>Total:</i>	\$141,187.02

Ms. Hooper asked whether the high school counselors could take on some of the RCTC special needs coordinator and vocational assessor. Dr. O'Connor stated there are 6 high school counselors. Mr. George stated with 1700 students, the maximum number of students per counselor is close to reaching accreditation limits (1 counselor to 300 students). "Next year, I may well be coming to ask you for that 7<sup>th</sup> counselor. The works that's being done right now with the coordination with April O'Keefe and the vocational assessor position is one that has been a strong program to broaden our outreach to the community in terms of work study programs, and internships, and coops, and that work has been proceeding in a positive direction with the Chamber of Commerce." Ms. Hooper noted that meant we would be "take a real hit if we lose these people."

Ms. Grady asked if kindergarten were to go full day, would the Smart Start program be eliminated? Dr. O'Connor stated that was correct. However, the cost would be transferred over to the kindergarten program. Ms. Grady asked if full-day kindergarten would create a savings in transportation. Dr. O'Connor stated there would be a savings by deleting the mid-day runs.

Ms. Grady moved on to question the Superintendent about his review of then pre-school program for possible savings. Dr. O'Connor stated his belief there would not be a significant savings by reducing the numbers of students. There was a possibility of taking a local position at \$56,000 and moving it into the federal position and that would only be if the program were contracted out.

Ms. Grady added, "There is no state law that says we have to have...it's listed as a special education pre-school and we've added to that about 25 students who originally were in head-start and those programs." Dr. O'Connor clarified they are students with special needs for whom we must provide services. There is a mix of "typical" students with them. Ms. Adams stated there are about 18 "typical" students spread throughout four sections. Ten of those "typical" students also bring a full-time aide with them from Head Start. "If we eliminated those students, we would also need to eliminate the aide at the cost of \$20,000. We spread the Head-Start students throughout the program to meet the spirit of the law, which says we should have a full-inclusion program. Eliminating two or three or four students per section, it would not save any teacher. It would open a few extra seats."

Ms. Grady stated, "It just seems to be an entirely different program than what was originally sold to the Board that I was on. It was not the explanation that was given to us. We started with seven special needs persons, and we met in the Superintendent's office and your concern was, at that time, was about the real needy pre-school kids." Ms. Adams responded, "We are required by law to provide special Ed services to every identified pre-school student, ages 3 to 5. When I first came, we had about 9 students in Nancy Brown's class at Woodman Park School with an aide. We were contracting out for speech, OT, and PT services, and we had children in all kinds of nursery schools and kindergartens all over Dover and we had staff in about ten or twelve different places. I made it into an inclusion model, brought all the kids back into our program and hired a second teacher. We broke even that year because we were paying tuition to about eleven different programs. After that, our numbers continued to increase. Kids are coming and they continue to come. We test about 125 kids a year who are potentially special Ed. We still have students in typical pre-schools that we go out and service, but that's a parent choice."

Ms. Grady asked the amount of tuition we receive from incoming students. Dr. O'Connor stated it was approximately \$9,500.

Ms. Mebert stated she had heard that some schools in the state require students to pay fees for extra-curricular activities. "I don't like this idea personally, but it's being done because finances are tight everywhere. Kids are paying fees for extra-curricular activities and athletics." Dr. O'Connor stated that we did not charge up front, but, when we don't fund new uniforms, equipment, or coaches' salaries, in essence we pass on a fee to those parents. Ms. Mebert then asked about non-curricular activities. Dr. O'Connor stated most clubs are not fee based. Ms. Mebert noted it is a possibility that a fee could be charged. "There are things that we could do to generate more revenue and some people would probably consider those fairer than taxing everybody. We could have user fees instead of donors. I don't like the idea but I do think that we have to start thinking about these other things unless we just want to eliminate all activities that are not specific to the essential mission of this district which is to provide the education that the students need – an adequate education, if the state ever gets around to defining, an adequate education." Dr. O'Connor asked Mr. Wotton to contact other schools that do charge fees and ask how that is working – if this has caused a decrease in student participation - how many students apply for subsidies – or any other impact. Additionally, the Superintendent asked Mr. Wotton to advise how many high school students participate in sports - actual numbers (i.e. do not count one student athlete three times for s\three sports).

Ms. Hooper asked the Superintendent to add the \$215,464.19 back into the budget, and asked what the increase percentage would be. The Superintendent stated it would be approximately 5.2%.

Ms. Grady stated, "I have a hard time with the elimination of 9 clubs at the high school level. That's social activity and our responsibility for kids' social growth is as important as their educational growth. I think there are other places that can be found without removing that particular one. I guess I can say the same thing for some of the athletic things. This is a new list for us and I think its something that we still have to go home an look at and compare to what we have before we can really start cutting." Ms. Grady then asked, "State standard for the number of pupils per principal or administrator...is it still 500?" Dr. O'Connor stated it is recommended an assistant principal for every 500 students, a second administrator including a principal. Ms. Grady noted, if that were true, we do have three at Dover Middle School for a few more than a thousand and the Board should look at that. "That would be looking at a big amount of money, rather than sacrificing kids events and kids things. None of what we're talking about is anything we like. They're just suggestions."

Ms. Mebert asked, "If we cut electives, we would not need some of these new teachers. Is that correct?" Dr. O'Connor stated that was true but questioned, "What do we do with the students? If there are no electives to place students in and they have their core required courses, then you end up in a study hall situation of which, I think we are pushing the envelope now, with study halls." Ms. Mebert reiterated that these students are taking electives because they've met their requirements. Dr. O'Connor noted that was correct, or because a requirement was not available to fit their schedules. He added that Dover requires only 20 credits to graduate and noted that some area high schools require 23, 24, 25, or 26 credits. He added that Mr. George is working with his faculty to look at block scheduling. "We may be going to a block scheduling."

Ms. Hooper stated, "I assume that all of us who are sitting here were put into this job with the major concern, the children in the Dover public schools and what is best for them. Therefore, even though I am a suffering taxpayer myself, again, for a condo that has no property, I find that I'm not going to be shy about saying, 'I don't want these cuts.'" And, if we go over the percentage that we perceive that another city body wants us to come in at, I don't care. I feel it's important to service children and I feel that it's important to keep programs that make them better students, and I think that teachers are a very, very major part of that; and class sizes also. Again, I think we are definitely charged with the responsibility of not being wasteful, and I don't think we are. But I think when we begin to cut into programs that really directly affect kids, I think we're in trouble and I don't think that's my job here – I'm not going to worry about the percent...I said this last year - I'm through worrying about percent, I'm concerned with keeping programs that are necessary for kids. If that goes over the percentage that we THINK we are going to be allowed to have – too bad! I think our job is to service our youngsters. We can nickel and dime this from now until dooms day. There are definitely things we can take out that I think are frivolous. Programs that are not working; programs we been supporting for the last three or four years at \$65,000 a pop. I think we can take them out, but I certainly don't want to see us deny kids the right to take certain classes because we don't have teachers to cover them. Nor do I want to see 35 and 40 students in a class because we can't keep our class sizes down. Nor do I want to see us lose our accreditation on the basis that we're not providing small enough classes for our students and individualized attention. Here we are talking about cutting back on staff at the same time that we're talking about individualized instruction in the classroom. What insanity is that?"

Ms. Grady agreed but stated "We will nickel and dime, but the bottom line is, once you're given the basic figure to run the Dover School System, it's your job to take that money and spend it the best way that you can. All of these that we could say tonight 'it's okay,' when you get the money if you don't think it's okay, you spend it where it should be and that's fine. But we can nickel and dime items – that bothers me every year. We nickel and dime different things all the time and the bottom line is, it doesn't make any difference. You get a figure, you run the business, and do it the best you can. It's just crazy to just cut it up, down and whatever. If we set a percentage and say, 'this is the best we can do,' give me the money and run it."

Dr. O'Connor stated once again that there are 4,000 students in the district serviced by approximately 500 staff who received a modest salary increase. However, there are SIGNIFICANT increases in health care, retirement benefits. We pay over \$4 million dollars in health care. We are impacted by a 4% increase in contractual growth. The increase in remaining items has been very modest. Cutting any of items on the list will impact the district. Brandon Foye stated the list of cuts were not acceptable for him to cut at this point. He asked for clarification on the list: "For instance, I'm looking at the textbook replacement at Garrison for \$4,000. Is that to replace from what you have in the budget?" Dr. O'Connor stated, "In the budget it may have been a \$13,000 item. I am reducing it by \$4,000 (to \$7,000)." He reiterated that some items on the cut list were total eliminations while others were simply reductions.

Dorothea Hooper moved, Brandon Foye seconded, to retain new personnel requests in the amount of \$215,464.19.

Ms. Grady stated her belief that the Board should not add any new positions until we get firm figures on the cost for transportation and the proposed full day kindergarten. "We don't know what's going to happen yet on the two issues we talked about before – transportation and kindergarten. I don't think we shall add anything until we know..." Ms. Hooper added, "As much as I favor all day kindergarten, how can we possibly discuss bringing in another program and staffing it. I don't know how that can even come up at this point. Just another additional expense." Dr. O'Connor stated his belief there could be a significant savings in transportation that might be applied toward the full-day program, thus not increasing the budget, but use that funding source for new personnel.

Ms. Lurvey stated there was a motion on the floor and asked for a vote. An oral **VOTE PASSED 5/1 (Grady opposed)**.

Dr. O'Connor stated would bring the increase to approximately 5.2%

Brandon Foye responded to Ms. Hooper's comments on the kindergarten. "I don't foresee us ever feeling like we have a lot of extra money, so if we're going to do the kindergarten this year, next year, I don't see a difference." He then asked Mr. Wotton to address a general line item for replacement of athletics equipment and asked what this is for, specifically. Mr. Wotton stated the item is for cheering uniforms that not been replaced in nine or ten years.

Dr. O'Connor suggested the Board make a motion to vote tentatively on the remainder of items listed for cuts (minus the new staff that they voted previously to retain) and accept the Superintendent's recommendation. He noted changes could be made to add items back in prior to adoption of the budget.

Ms. Setear stated, "I hesitate to do that, looking at the small amount of money that we actually do spend on things other than personnel. I think, to put it on the table is at least an opportunity to look at them. Then again after salaries, what we get to spend is about \$2.1 million which, in a \$38 million is not a lot to do away with in trying to operate a school district on a day-to-day basis knowing that already teachers are asking parents to contribute to classroom supplies and that we're not adequately funding classroom supplies at any level. But I think it's worth talking about. If we were to adequately fund supplies, we would be looking at a significantly higher budget."

Ms. Grady asked how the Board could vote to cut staff while adding \$215,000 worth of new staff. Dr. O'Connor explained one was not elimination – rather a reassignment to a classroom. The one elimination is based on current anticipated lower enrollments.

Dorothea Hooper moved, Carolyn Mebert seconded, to accept the Superintendent's recommended cuts (except for new personnel requests voted to remain previously) in the amount of \$ 314,153.21. An oral **VOTE PASSED 4/2 (Grady and Foye opposed)**.

Dr. O'Connor asked Board members to provide direction for the next budget workshop scheduled for March 5, 2007.

Ms. Hooper asked Dr. O'Connor to provide a percentage, "that would allow is to run this district at a modest amount of growth." Dr. O'Connor replied, "Truthfully, we know that we're impacted by approximately 4% contractual obligations – we have to pay our heat and we know that's going up, etc., etc. I'd love to see a modest growth on that of 2% to get us to 6%." Ms. Hooper stated, "I have no problem with that. If that's what it takes to run this school district, then that would be my recommendation. If it is turned down by another body in the city, okay. Then we'll come back to the drawing board. That makes more sense to me to say, 'What do you need to run the district. You're the CEO. What do you need?'"

Ms. Grady cautioned – "One understanding here. If that's the figure we go to the council with and they say, 'no, you're not going to have 6% - You're gonna have 5%', We don't get an opportunity to go back to the Council with the 5% and say, 'Will you pass that?' The Council makes that final decision and says, 'You have 5% - run your system.' There isn't a chance to come back and break it down and go back and ask if it's okay if they'll accept it. Whatever we go in with, we won't be making the decision, they will be making the decision. That's the way it works. That bothers me." Ms. Hooper added, "They'll make the decision on the bottom line, but not how we spend it. That's a decision we make. And then the onus is on the Council when we can't provide for the youngsters what we need to provide."

Ms. Mebert noted, "If you do that, you come in with modest growth, let's say 6% budget increase – what I would like to see what that is getting the students of Dover...Modest growth in my understanding of the sense of that, with respect to school district, would mean something the students are getting then that they're not getting now." Dr. O'Connor stated, "You could basically take everything that we have right here and put it back in and gets us at 6%. This is what they're getting. There's equipment (benefiting students). It's basically this list with some minor modifications." Ms. Mebert asked about textbooks. "We're doing some curriculum adoptions this year. We'll probably need new textbooks with the curriculum adoption across the district. If it doesn't require \$13,000 per elementary school for those curriculum adoptions, then lets just find out what it does cost and allocate that money." Dr. O'Connor explained curriculum adoption textbooks are carried under curriculum line items and are quite precise. The accounts Ms. Mebert referenced are replacement textbook accounts. These funds replace 5 to 7 year old texts that are wearing out. Additionally, these accounts pay for consumable work texts that must be purchased every year.

**E: ADJOURNMENT:** Dorothea Hooper moved, Doris Grady seconded, to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 p.m. An oral **VOTE PASSED 6/0.**

Respectfully submitted,

BRANDON FOYE, Secretary  
Dover School Board  
BF/kgb  
2/27/07