

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING/BUDGET WORKSHOP
DOVER CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
TUESDAY, APRIL 30, 2002
6:30 PM

DISCUSSION RE: BUDGET OVERVIEW

1. SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

The Mayor called the meeting to order saying Hindle and Christenbury have a few words they would like to say. Hindle wanted to send Ray Proulx's family condolences and heartfelt sympathy. He will be remembered for being a gracious human being. He stated after the election last fall, Ray was the first one on Hindle's answering machine to congratulate Heather, his wife, who had run against him and offered his support. Christenbury feels that he, Dunnington, and Nossiff knew him best. He held no grudges. Ray exemplified the "old time" politicians. Politics was a profession; not about personalities like it is today. He was stalwart in setting that kind of tone. With the passing of Ray, it is the passing of an era. Christenbury has known Ray all his life even though they were on political extremes. There were no politics with Ray. Quigley was on the board with Christenbury and Ray and he always had a different point of view, they used to call him Mr. Union. He will miss Ray, he continued that he always wore his union and political buttons on his coat long after he was working.

Nick Skaltsis says Christenbury is right, that Ray could debate and disagree with you all night and the next day it would be all over. There is a lesson to be learned from him. For natives like himself, he will be really missed.

Nick is here representing 4,700 people in the school system that work every day. The School Board has adopted the budget that is before them. They are looking for us to review only the bottom line of the budget. They, as Council have a different role as the School Board is fiduciary. They have far more responsibility as School Board members, the prior city council made it clear they wanted to minimize spending. They did not work in a vacuum this time and hopefully this council will be able to understand. He asked Armand LaSelva to speak on his vision and how we should go forth with this budget. LaSelva says the purpose of the school system is to educate the children, this is a big demand, they represent the financial resources that are available to the city. They have been raising the bar over the past couple of years and have been trying to enhance the performance of students. In order to bring this about you will see the most critical areas that we are asking for is the teachers. Teachers are the most important people in the process of education. They are looking to have a number of teachers added. In order to bring about the improvements necessary, we need to be sure we can fulfill what research is showing quite clearly, that class size has a direct correlation to the success and performance level. They have to make improvements to get their request of \$32 million and that is a commitment they can make for the achievements of long-range goals. Mr. Cooper, the business administrator is his assistant tonight. He continued with the power point presentation, (see folder of 4/30/2002).

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Nick explained the estimated tax rate increase at budget submission for FY2001 was \$2.24, FY2002 was \$1.45 and FY 2003 is \$.88 cents. The surplus revenue for FY 2001 was \$465,000 for FY2002 it was \$397,000 and FY2003 it is \$100,000 as of today. Any surplus revenue that comes in after tonight they must report to the council. The local tax rate impact would be currently @ + \$.87. The new net rate would be \$.82 as projected this evening. The School Board started in January with an 84 page document and removed \$414,290 to bring them down to \$32,230,456 this evening by going through every line item and the budget was minimally level funded. They adjusted their tuition, and recently signed a new contract with Laidlaw and COAST transportation for a bus contract. He continued they are looking for 10 teachers at the high school, he listed other teachers that are needed at the different schools. His hope is to provide services to all the students at all elementary schools. They were not aware that the school resource officer's grant was terminating this year. He asked Barbara Szabunka, principal of Horne Street School to explain her needs at the elementary school.

He then called Liz DuBois, principal of Garrison Elementary School, to speak on the progress of the fight with literacy these past six years. She is also chair of the Curriculum Standards Committee at the middle and high school. Teachers are now planning together and sharing their knowledge and expertise and the results are seen in their test scores. The Mayor would like to pause for questions from the Council. Hofemann wanted to know if these teachers have common lesson plans or do they do their own individual lessons. LaSelva stated there are teacher guides, but the teacher has to look at the students they are trying to serve and figure out a program for them. Christenbury has a question on the slide of 1990 versus the 2000 slide and how many tuition students were there then. Nick says under 600 now and in 1990 under 300 students.

Christenbury says there is a lot of concern in the community with the rates that we are charging tuition students. Nick says there is a huge difference in a school of 1,200 and one of 1,600 high school students. We are currently just under 1,200 students. Whitmore asked as a follow-up to Christenbury, why don't we want to collect all the costs for out-of-district students? LaSelva explained the MS 25 program, and how they have to be careful by reducing the out-of-district students. Quigley asked about the \$32 million budget, and what percent is the increase over last years budget. Nick says 8%. Hofemann brings up a point on the 11 new teachers and class sizes, he pointed out the Department of Defense (DOD) schools - military have 30 students in their classes. Also DOD schools have extraordinary funding. Dunnington asked about the 11 new teachers and how under control do you think you are with students that live out of the district with students that say they live in Dover but really live out of the district. Nick says they had under 20 cases in question since September. Christenbury asked again about tuition

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students as Whitmore had brought up, we know we are not recovering the overhead, what are they doing about these students that come in from out of district that can't read? What are the costs associated with this? Nick says they have scheduled a joint meeting with the Barrington School Board as well as the Nottingham School Board. Students must be prepared for 9th grade, Christenbury says when it came to light last year, this issue was not explained clearly to the public. This is a serious issue, as there is a significant impact on the students at the high school. Nick says they are tracking students after they leave the middle school. LaSelva wants to communicate to the council that about 15% of our population is receiving special services and if they have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), they are charged for the aid, so there is some kind of cost recovery. Taylor has a question on the contract price, is there any state statute that limits us the cost of educating a student. Nick has not seen any limit, Taylor says so we could charge a little more. Nick responded that is correct.

Nick then introduced John O'Connor principal of Dover Middle School. He stated they need 4.5 new staff people at his school this year. He explained the total enrollment of the school population and the middle school capacity is 1,000 students with a core facility of 1,200 students. The official enrollment on October 1st of last year of the 4 years is 1,086. In the last 18 months they have added staff to help with reading for students who are struggling in this area. They are getting fabulous results with some at risk kids. The half-year results are extremely impressive, they also had a great summer school program. Whitmore asked about the 4.5 staff that is requested and do they have space for them to work. They will have teachers on a cart Mr. O'Connor says, such as the art teacher that will go from class to class. The current fifth grade has just under 300 students. Quigley asked is there any outside departments that are taking up space in that building. Mr. O'Connor stated DARE is there but will not be there next year. They have increased enrollment by 41 new students this year. Christenbury says the school was never designed for 5th grade. That is incorrect information says Mr. O'Connor. Whitmore says if you get 41 more new students what will happen. The class size will just increase says O'Connor.

The final speaker is the acting principal of DHS, Gail Kushner. She stated they have a few challenges at the high school and that Eric Ely will be the new high school principal next year. One of our major challenges is limited space, they only have 5 classes that are available during the days and some of these are science labs. Several teachers have to move during the day. Again, she is concerned with class size, she explained the numbers again in the high school. There is another challenge, they need to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity here in Dover. They currently serve 12 different languages. She is wearing 3 hats here and now talks about professional development, and how the state has required the new re-certification plan that must be adhered to. Nick says that this concludes their report.

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The City Manager stated he has been sitting here 10 years and this is the best presentation he has seen by the school department. Quigley asked about dropping curriculum development, as the numbers are not adding up to him. Nick explained the numbers saying something here had to give and class size is more important than curriculum revision. Quigley feels curriculum goes hand in hand with good teachers and he disagrees with Nick. Nick says there is only one course of study left to review and that is math. Quigley stated he will not debate this here. Whitmore thanked the school department for their numbers. She mentioned the shopping list of last year, based on the summary sheet presented. It was cut by \$200,000 if she reads this correctly. Nick says Jeff Harrington would not allow them to split the appropriation. It was always at \$902,000. Nick says it was always part of the operating budget, he explained the prior Mayor's thinking. She followed up asking how confident are we about receiving those funds. Nick stated, it may be reduced by any legislation that may pass. Whitmore wants people to understand this money is in flux. Nick says we need a long-term commitment from the state. She continued about the resource officer and how are they going to accommodate that in the school budget. Nick says it may be one position that is cut or a couple of programs. Whitmore has been hearing about the teacher/student ratio, we contradict our own goals.

Christenbury says when he ran, he said he was not going to micro-manage the school department. People should address this at election time, this council and school board has worked very closely this time. Christenbury is hesitant to tell them how to spend their money. He is in a quandary on how he will vote. Christenbury feels we do need a resource officer and it should be provided by the police department and not out of the school budget. He also will ask the police department to ask to recover costs for out of district students that must have an investigation. The previous council did not re-zone as staff asked this past year and now we are holding the school board accountable. This is not fair, the council shares the blame for the number of students in the system. Christenbury had the pleasure of serving with Mr. LaSelva, Nick Skaltsis, and Quigley. The total request for the FY2003 school budget is \$32,230,456. Nick says they only get to manage these increases in student population. The Mayor thanked the School Board for the treats they brought in this evening and for all the hard work that has gone into this budget by them going line by line. Nick thanked them for giving the School Board an evening of their own.

ADJOURN

The Mayor moved to adjourn at 8:50 PM, all in favor.

Judy Gaouette
City Clerk