

**MINUTES  
BUDGET WORKSHOP  
DOVER CITY COUNCIL  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
MAY 1, 2000  
7:00 P.M.**

Members Present: Boc, Berry, Mayberry, Schmidt, Reese, Hindle, Dunnington and Nossiff.

Members Absent: Andrews Parker

**1. BUDGET PRESENTATION:  
A. SCHOOL DEPARTMENT**

Mayor Boc opened the meeting and welcomed the School Board members and School Department staff in attendance. He stated that he and Councilor Hindle have attended most of the budget workshops and have seen the detailed budget and referred the other Councilors to Superintendent LaSelva for copies. He then turned the meeting over to School Board Chairman, Marc Vaillancourt.

Mr. Vaillancourt began by stating that Asst. Superintendent Stephania Pearce would not be able to attend due to a death in the family. Next, he gave a brief overview of the process undertaken by the School Board in arriving at the proposed budget. He concluded by stating that the School Board feels that this budget will improve the school district and bring it forward to achieving our goals and asked that the Council approve the budget as presented.

Superintendent Armand LaSelva, began by stating that the budget presented (see summary in 05/01/00 meeting folder) is the result of 10 budget sessions and was reduced by \$830,000 from the initial figure. He stated most of the cuts made were in the area of personnel and referred to Attachment A of the summary. He then stated that the School Board adopted the 2000-2001 budget of \$24,225,124.00 (See attachment B) by a unanimous vote on April 10, 2000. He stated this budget represents an increase of \$2,285,611.00 or 10.42% over the 1999 appropriation. He stated the features driving the budget include accountability, curriculum revision and assessment. He then reviewed the proposed implementation of these issues, stating that this budget looks to reallocate resources to take corrective action to improve instruction for all grade levels and doesn't just add positions.

Next, he discussed Technology, stating that technology is more than just installing computers in the classrooms, but means integrating the technology into the curriculum and providing for sustained support for the maintenance and operation of the system. He stated a Director of Technology is necessary to manage all aspects of the District's instructional technology programs and to create a cost-effective system that integrates the best hardware and software into daily classroom routines for all students. He then recited various quotes regarding technology, which demonstrated how far technology has come and how quickly it continues to change. Technology accounts for 5% of the increase.

Next, he discussed the new Dover Middle School, stating that the additional staff, as well as increased electricity and gas represents 21.6% of the increase to the

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budget. Regarding transportation, he stated that there are no additional buses being added, but the bus runs are being changed to a three-tiered system to eliminate the older children being on the same bus as the younger children. He stated that the contract with the bus company calls for an increase of \$106,645 in this 4<sup>th</sup> year of the contract, which represents 4.7% of the increase.

Regarding Health Insurance, the increase of the premium cost is \$425,000 or 18.6% of the budget increase of \$2,1285,611.00. He stated that the staff did look at other plans, but found that we couldn't do any better.

He then addressed the request for additional staffing (See attachment A) which began for a request of 52 new/realigned positions. He explained that realigned means that some existing positions are having the hours increased in order to be able to accommodate a particular duty. After the 10 budget workshops, the request went to 36.5 new/realigned positions. He also discussed enrollment figures (see Attachment D for projected 10-year enrollment for Dover and Attachment C for statewide enrollment figures).

Boc stated that, based on the figures presented, it appears that the enrollment is actually down by 100 students and therefore 36.5 new positions seem like a lot.

Mr. LaSelva stated that there are new requirements in the courses taken in several grades, which adds to the work level as well as the positions for extra-curricular activities.

Boc asked what elementary schools have assistant principals.

LaSelva stated there is an assistant principal at Garrison and a combination asst. principal/guidance councilor at Home Street because there happened to be an individual who was effective in that dual role.

Boc asked if there is still a need for assistant principals at the grade school level with the 5<sup>th</sup> grade going to the middle school.

LaSelva stated that the State strongly advises assistant principals for student bodies over 500, which Garrison School will still have, including kindergarten.

Boc stated that the teacher contracts are still on-going and asked if the School Department will have to come back to the Council to fund the settlements.

LaSelva stated that he doesn't have any room in his proposed budget to absorb the settlement.

Boc asked about the 17/1 figure for student /teacher ratio, stating that his son had over 20 in most of his classrooms at Dover High.

Mr. LaSelva explained that this figure is based on all teachers in the school system, though some have more in the classes and others may not teach all of the time.

Nossiff asked how much of the 10% increase to this budget is a one-time expense and will not come back again and also what will be the effect of the teacher contract settlement and loss of tuition revenue with the potential high school in Barrington.

LaSelva stated he assumes that we won't experience the same type of increase to the health insurance as we are this year of 31%, although there will still be some increase. He stated that, regarding curriculum development, this is an ongoing program, but shouldn't

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exceed this increase. He stated that we are looking at longer instructional days for the children and cannot project the space needs for the future with all of the ongoing development. He stated he doesn't anticipate asking for a 10% increase for the next several years, but feels that this budget is a baseline for putting the middle school on-line and implementing the curriculum and programs being put into place. Regarding tuition revenue, Barrington is looking at a high school, but is at least 4 years away. He continued by stating that his goal is to put in place an alternative school program which he hopes will serve as a model and can then generate tuition revenue as well. He stated this will be in the old middle school, which is currently undergoing renovation.

Dunnington stated he is concerned with not having the potential impact of the teacher contracts.

Boc reminded the Council that this can not be discussed in public.

LaSelva stated that this is going to mediation and suggested that a non-public session be scheduled.

Berry asked if the figures quoted for the new/realigned positions include all costs related to these positions.

LaSelva stated yes, 20% of the figure is the benefit figure associated with those positions. Berry then stated that the city needs to look at the fiscal policy as it relates to the school as they need to know their bottom line earlier because they begin filling positions for the next school year in April.

Berry continued by asking for various figures regarding equipment and staff development and stated that this information is necessary and is why the Council usually receives detailed budgets prior to the workshop. He then stated that it is his feeling that there will be additions necessary to the new middle school and suggested that these costs be looked at soon. He concluded by stating that although this is a considerable increase and is more than the taxpayers will be willing to pay, he feels it is a result of previous Councils' cutting of the school budget over the past few years.

Schmidt asked if the health insurance costs include the new positions and how many of them are actual teachers.

LaSelva stated yes, this includes the health insurance costs for all positions and 13 of the positions are teachers.

Schmidt asked what this does to the student/teacher ratio and asked if the vocational education enrollment figures are the same.

LaSelva stated that he feels the figures will be about the same.

Schmidt then asked about the projected cost of the alternative school stating that a constituent raised the point that this was already a school, and questioned why would it cost so much.

LaSelva stated he cannot quote a figure at this time, but currently there is \$147,000 budgeted for the renovations necessary which will only begin to bring the building up to code. He then addressed the various problems that need to be corrected.

Marc Vaillancourt added that the State of New Hampshire directed the School District to do something about the alternative school and deemed the current conditions as inhumane. He stated that if something is not done, we could lose our accreditation.

Mayberry stated that he feels people don't mind paying an increase if they can see the results. He stated that class size is an issue and asked about the position of English

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teacher, which appears to have been deleted. He also asked about the addition of a dean to the Middle School, when only one grade is being added.

LaSelva stated that the dean position figure of \$75,000 includes benefits and will allow for 2 deans to divide the student body equally to 500 in each wing. He stated the deans interact with students and teachers, participate in the evaluation of staff, as well as perform disciplinary duties.

Mayberry asked if these could be part-time positions.

LaSelva stated that this particular age group is at the highest emotional development stage and needs constant attention.

Mayberry asked about reading scores currently and what improvement is hoped to be gained if this budget is approved.

LaSelva stated he doesn't have concrete figures to go by that verify that 28-30% of the children are reading below grade level, but feels that is fairly accurate. He stated that this is why we want to do the district-wide assessment. He stated there are children coming to the middle school from 3 different elementary school with no coordinated curriculum, and therefore, they are all at different levels.

Mayberry asked if one of the goals of the teacher contract is the extension of the school day.

LaSelva stated that it is a goal of the district to have more instruction time to engage students in the educational process.

Mayberry asked about the duties of the technology coordinator.

LaSelva stated that in addition to maintaining and implementing equipment and software, the focus should be on curriculum integration. He stated that technology is a tool and is not going to take the place of teaching, but the teachers need to be trained on how to utilize this technology as a part of their curriculum on a daily basis.

Mayberry then asked School Board member Nick Skaltsis to explain the effect of the school budget on the tax rate.

Nick stated that as far as the school side of the tax rate is concerned, we have hovered around \$16 per thousand since 1994 and it dropped to \$14 a thousand last year. He stated that if the budget is passed as presented, it will represent about \$16.70 per thousand., which is only 4% higher than 1994.

He continued by stating that he took a different approach to the budget than the Superintendent who has done a good job advocating a \$1.61 increase in the tax rate, but the actual school side increase with the bonded indebtedness of improvements to the high school, Woodman Park, and the new middle school, is actually a \$2.24 increase. He stated he feels it was simple to separate that there is a \$1.00 increase to the actual operating budget, and the other \$1.20 is for the debt and overhead and operation of the new middle school. He stated the community supported the decision to build a \$15 million school, and now the taxpayer is being presented with the bill. He stated the only cost of the middle school on last year's tax rate was 50 cents for the interest payment on the bond. He stated this increase was determined 18 months ago and now it is time to pay. He stated that in comparison to other similar communities, Dover is not exceptional. He concluded by stating that the School Board spent well over 30 hours deliberating over this budget, and feels the Council should adopt it as presented.

Hindle asked that a non-public session be held at the conclusion of the workshop.

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It was determined that since a non-public session was not posted as a part of the agenda, it could not be done. The consensus was to hold a non-public session at 6:30 p.m. before the 05/10/2000 regular meeting.

Hindle asked Mr. LaSelva to elaborate on the assistant principal job description.

LaSelva stated they supervise and observe teaching staff, perform evaluations of the teaching staff which requires conferences with the teacher who sets goals, observations, and recommendations. They also share in the general day-to-day operations of the school, handling behavioral issues, conferences with parents and students, and formulation of the budget.

Nossiff discussed special education, stating that the ever increasing ranks of special education staff is an indication of system failure and feels that children are placed into special education early on and are, from then on, placed in a box. He stated that 1 out of every 10 dollars goes to special education, and feels that this should be looked at closely. LaSelva stated that the special education budget is basically level funded from last year, with an increase in the transportation costs. He stated that he feels that behavioral problems are not encoded as special needs students, although some special needs students do exhibit behavior problems. He stated at the new middle school there are 3 "learning center" rooms to work with the behavioral students and teach them positive strategies to control these situations.

Kevin Quigley, School Board member, discussed the emphasis on curriculum and technology that has taken place over the last 3 years, stating that there were programs that hadn't been changed in 12 years.

Ray Proulx, School Board member, chair of the facilities committee, stated that the facilities budget has been ignored over the last few years and feels that it is time to address the physical repairs that need to be done. He stated that there has been a lot of discussion regarding the modular units at the schools and stated that removing them will take additional money as well.

Boc stated that he agrees that the first place to be cut has been in facilities maintenance and that this Council is aware that it needs to be addressed.

Berry stated a Capital Reserve fund was established last year for the School department by the Council, but has not yet been funded. He then addressed the adding of new positions, stating that once they are added, they become a regular part of the budget.

Mayor Boc thanked everyone for their participation and stated that the School Board did exactly what he had asked of them at the beginning of the process which was to bring forward a budget that they felt comfortable defending and one that was passed unanimously.

Schmidt stated that the phrase "pay me now or pay me later" comes to mind when discussing the school budget and the city infrastructure. He then discussed the probability of building a new elementary school in the near future and asked if the School Board is looking into this at this time.

Marc Vaillancourt stated we are looking into purchasing land for that purpose at the suggestion of Mr. Proulx, as available land in Dover is rapidly disappearing. He stated the other thing that they are looking into is redistricting, which is unpopular with the public.

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Schmidt concluded by discussing the school board's attempt to update and unify the curriculum in the elementary schools stating he feels it will help remedy the discrepancies between students when entering the middle school.

## **2. Adjournment**

Schmidt moved to adjourn, seconded and passed unanimously.

Valerie A. French  
Deputy City Clerk