

To: Dover City Council

From: Dorothea Hooper

Re: School Board Report

Date: 3/8/11

The Dover School Board met in Special Session on 3/7/11 for the purpose of discussing budget items.

There was an exceptionally large turnout during Public Forum with parents and students advocating for: funding of the CTC Firefighting Course (Fire Chief Plummer spoke in support of this program), reduction of class size, support of the new math program (Focus on Math), and support of proposed budgets (supporters for each percent rise). Members in the audience wore green ribbons to show their support of Dover education and educators.

Superintendent Briggs-Badger was thanked for her budget approach -----open and transparent. The public noted it was much easier to follow. Most board members agreed that it was an improvement.

Mrs. Grady responded to the remarks that had been made concerning cuts in the school budget. She noted that the board had added 18 million to the school budget in the past 10 years. She suggested reorganizing some programs, finding out what works and doesn't and finding more funding within the budget. The chair reminded the board that they had added some outstanding programs over those years (ex. -all day Kindergarten, upgrade of the CDC program) as well as had to address rising health care and retirement expenses and contractual responsibilities.

Starting with the proposed 2.3% budget, the board began discussing priority programs they wanted to add which included the ½ art teacher, Math In Focus, the firefighter program and the technology upgrade. They felt athletic transportation, the Peer Mentoring Program and the National Honor Society

should be funded within department budgets. This discussion would bring the budget up to 3.4%

Looking for cuts, they felt they could save \$85,000 by bringing 2 out of district placements in Special Education back into the local schools. The Superintendent also suggested removing the \$10,000 annuity that has been in the budget, indicating she did not plan to ask for that. This would bring the budget to a 3.25 increase over last years budget

Superintendent Briggs-Badger also discussed the great loss of federal funds that the local community would be expected to cover.

An issue raised by a couple of board members focused on the numbers being used to determine last years budget which did not reflect monies given back by the City Council or new hires and expenses after that budget was approved. They felt this gave a false starting point and the new budget was not actually as high a percent rise as it seemed to be.

Mrs. Grady discussed dropping some programs for a year, such as advanced languages, 5th grade music lessons, drumming, and professional development. The Superintendent noted that the \$80,000 was a contractual obligation allowing teaches to take additional courses and was also needed to train teachers in the new math program.

The Superintendent cited all the things we get in the Dover School System for the \$45 million we spend which was met by applause by the audience.

Board began voting on individual items for addition to the basic budget. Approved the Firefighter Academy (6 -1), addition of an art teacher, the math curriculum, and athletic transportation (7-0).

Dr. Appel raised the question as to what the board will be doing next week. The Chair explained that the additional week would give the public an opportunity to weigh in on what they have indicated they will be presenting to the Council.

Mrs. Grady indicated she would like to see \$ 519,000 cut from the %2.3 budget to fund what the board has established as priorities.

Dr. Appel requested the figures of what we have actually spent this year. It was his contention that we were really not spending as much more with the proposed budget as we had the year before. The addition of new teachers in September was not taken into account.

There was an exhaustive discussion over what the appropriate figures should be. At that point the board directed the superintendent and business manager to try and find \$500,000 of savings in the proposed budget to pay for the additional programs. Superintendent Briggs-Badger warned the board that such savings would require more cuts. There are already plans to pink-slip teachers in order to cover the district contractionally in case the governor's cuts come to fruition.

Bottom line ----the board spent \$44,700,000 this year and is asking for 46,000,000 in their proposed budget for next year. They will have to vote their final budget to be sent to the council at their meeting on March 14th.

Sorry this report is so long but it got very complicated!