

**Finance Board, Subcommittee on School Dept. Meeting Minutes: April 2, 2014**

TOWN CLERK  
REGISTRARS

**Attendees:** Les Olson/Superintendent of Schools, Bill Previdi, Rachel Meredith-Warren, Julie Desimone

2014 APR 28 P 12:58

Rachel Meredith-Warren prepared the minutes.

All questions refer to the School Dept budget (attached) adopted by the School Committee on 3/27/14. Please note that I have rounded numbers half a percentage point in some cases to make the explanations clearer.

Question 1: Line B/Middle School Teachers Salaries calls for a 24.2%/~\$800k increase in FY15 and Line A/Elementary School Teachers Salaries only calls for a -2.8%/\$174k decrease. Why is this increase in Middle School Teachers so high and the decrease in Elementary School Teachers so low when the only change is transferring some fifth grade elementary school teachers into the new middle school?

As important context, in looking at the budget as a whole, there are no net increases in staffing proposed for FY15.

Regarding Part B, several factors are in play.

- In FY15, eight full time equivalent (FTE) teachers will be transferred to the middle school, resulting in a decrease of 8 FTEs from the elementary school.
- In addition, 2 FTE special education teachers will move to the middle school.
- Five new FTEs (4 FTEs for instructional technology, .5 FTE for music, .5 FTE for library paraprofessional) are being added to the middle school as part of new programs.
- Team teaching to enrich students' academic experience, which has been long term aspiration, is being implemented in FY15. Team teaching has required a shift to a 7 period schedule instead of a 6 period schedule. It also requires time for teachers to plan together as a team. Adequately staffing team teaching while maintaining staffing of classroom time requires an overall increase in FTE hours.
- Lastly, estimated increases in Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs), step increases, estimated substitute teach coverage are included in Part B.

Note: We did not review the composition of Part A/Elementary School Teachers in the meeting. The Part A detail shows that the cost savings of eliminating Central School of elementary school teachers salaries is shown, but significant increases in other areas of elementary school teacher staffing is also projected, including increased teaching staff at remaining elementary school levels, special education staffing, district specialists.

Question 2: Why is there a 103%/\$83k increase in Middle School Expenses/Part G? This seems high.

Dr. Olson reviewed each line of the Part G Detail Sheet with the Subcommittee. Increases were due to updating textbooks, including shifting fifth grade textbooks to the same series used by the rest of the middle school. Expenses in some lines are expected to increase

because there will be a new grade (the fifth graders) being supported at the middle school in FY15. Additionally, the current cohort of students with special needs moving into the middle school has some deeper needs than the current cohort, resulting in increased costs. Additionally teacher reimbursements for professional development are expected to increase in 2015.

Question 3: Why is there such a large increase in Part K/District Support Expenses? This Part is projected to increase 314%/\$164k.

The components of the increase are:

- A one time increase of \$110k in unemployment payments to teachers who are being eliminated in the transition to the new middle school.
- \$54,000 in new transportation costs for elementary school students near Central School who will now attend South School. From the initial consideration of elementary school redistricting, the school dept. was aware that busing would be needed for these students due to safety concerns. It was not proximity (exceeding 2 miles of distance) to the school buildings that has compelled busing, but concern for student safety in attempting a pedestrian approach to South School.

Question 4: Why are utilities expected to increase 8.5%/\$66k if there is a new efficient HVAC system coming online at the new middle school?

The old middle school did not have air conditioning. The new HVAC system will be cooling an additional 80,000 SF of space. It is also an up to date modern system which will be more effective at providing HVAC and includes numerous mechanical systems and components that will require electricity to run.

Question 5: Why is District Wide – Instructional Technology, p. 76 of December 2013 version of budget (PDF) showing a \$43k/159% increase.

The school district doubled its bandwidth availability in order to keep pace with IT requirements. The 32% decrease/- \$46k in District Wide – Technology Equipment reflects a onetime major equipment purchase in FY14 that will not recur in FY15.

Question 6: Please explain the School Committee's Warrant Article 8 for Annual Town Meeting.

From FY14, \$7k remains in the budget used for to upgrade a Midi Lab (music related). Another \$19k remains in a budget projected for window replacement at Robin Hood School. The School Dept. succeeded in getting the window manufacturer to accept responsibility for a defective product by invoking the material warranty. The School Dept. had to pay labor costs to have the replacement windows installed, but did not have to pay for the windows themselves. The School Dept. plans to use these funds to upgrade the buzzer and camera systems at each elementary school.

The Subcommittee plans to meet again with Dr. Olson when our next agenda is developed.