

The April School Committee newsletter has been delayed as we have wrapped up Town Meeting and addressed the implementation of the budget. On March 31, Sudbury residents had the choice of two override levels. With this approach, the Board of Selectmen allowed Sudbury voters to decide whether to keep the current staff level with a higher override, to reduce services but lessen the impact with a lower override, or to dramatically reduce services with a non-override budget. The voters rejected both override options. During the week between the Town Election and Town Meeting, there were several major developments.

First, the Board of Selectmen, working in concert with the Finance Committee and the two School Committees, determined that, given the decisive results of the election, the non-override budget would be the only budget presented at Town Meeting. Any Proposition 2 ½ override must be approved both at Town Meeting and in a Town Election. There have been times in the past when an override that failed in an election has been adopted at Town Meeting and then voted at a subsequent election. This may happen again in the future. This year, however, the decision was made to proceed with the non-override budget given the margin of difference in the vote, the economic conditions, and the cost of another election.

In addition, the revenue projections built into the non-override budget were adjusted prior to Town Meeting. The House and Senate had passed a resolution which provided municipalities the local aid revenue numbers expected to be part of the final state budget. The school aid was higher than had been anticipated in developing the non-override budgets. The Selectmen, Finance Committee, and the School Committees together determined that most of this additional revenue would be allocated to the Sudbury Public Schools in the budget to be offered at Town Meeting. This collaborative decision stemmed from the desire to lessen the impact of the deep cuts faced by SPS, although it was recognized that Lincoln-Sudbury and the Town Departments also will be severely impacted by the non-override budget shortfall. During Town Meeting, the voters approved the non-override budget presented, which included the additional revenue for SPS. Prior to this addition, SPS had anticipated elimination of 26 staff positions (or many positions that add up to 26 full-time equivalent positions). We now anticipate the elimination of about 22 FTE positions.

During this time, the administration and the School Committee have continued to review the budget balancing plan to make the best use of the available revenue. These decisions involve a balance of the need to keep class sizes from growing too large with the need to maintain adequate supports for the classroom. In some cases, system-wide or building-wide supports are viewed as critical for the needs of the students, especially concerning health and safety, or to further the implementation of a strong curriculum consistently and effectively throughout the district. Some staffing decisions are determined by legal requirements concerning reporting, finances, required initiatives, and continuous improvement. Finally, continued review of updated enrollment and student assignment has led to some adjustments aimed at leveling class sizes. Information about the positions eliminated under the budget balancing plan will be provided soon; specific information about staffing and class assignments will follow as usual toward the end of the year.

As part of this process, the School Committee also reviewed expense areas and has adopted new fees. The fees for sports have been raised to \$195 for the first sport and \$95 for additional

sports, to cover the costs required to maintain the sports program. Student activity fees have been raised to \$50 for all activities including select music groups; the fees do not cover all of the costs of these programs but will now offset a higher proportion of the costs. Thus, there are currently no plans to eliminate any sports or activities for next year. The Committee also considered eliminating all busing that is not required by law. The District is required to bus only those K-6 students who live more than 2 miles from school; these students cannot be charged for this service. The Committee decided to maintain the non-mandatory busing for next year by raising the transportation fees to cover the costs of all busing that is not legally required. We also will save money by further eliminating bus stops and reducing the number of bus routes. The fees charged for all non-mandated bus service have been raised to \$350 per student with a family cap of \$635. This is a large increase and will be a burden for many families. However, the elimination of the non-mandated bus service could have been more burdensome to families who rely on the buses; the higher fees allow families to choose whether they want the bus service.

The School Committee appreciates the interest of those who have followed the budget process, attended meetings or forums, or contacted us with questions. Please feel free to contact us as we continue to plan for next year.

This is a challenging time for the staff in our schools. Some have been told they will not return next year. All are working diligently and professionally to plan for next year and will continue to do so. We value every staff member and appreciate the extraordinary work they do to provide an excellent education for our students.

Susan Iuliano
For the School Committee