

**MINUTES
TOWN OF PEMBROKE
BUDGET COMMITTEE
Thursday, January 22, 2009**

Members Present: David Freeman-Woolpert, Chair; Mark LePage, Vice Chair; Gerry Fleury; Ray Foss; Stacey Sheldon; Bruce Kurinskas; Tom Serafin, School Board Rep.; Fred Kline, Selectmen Rep.
Absent: Charles Connor, Mike Connor

The meeting began at 7:00 PM.

Documents Distributed: All members should have received the Trust Fund Balances reports distributed by Gerry via e-mail on January 16th.

After a revision was made regarding the partial new roof at Hill School, a motion to approve the minutes of January 15, 2008 as amended was made by Mark, seconded by Fred, and passed by unanimous vote.

Present for the School Budget discussion: Peter Warburton, Superintendent of Schools; Peter Aubrey, Business Administrator; John Burnham, Facilities Director; Clint Hanson, School Board Representative

A question regarding cable television and the lack of television sets at Hill and Village school was discussed.

Mr. Warburton updated the committee on questions that were outstanding from prior meetings.

1. Rather than try to differentiate the performance of P.A. students by which town they live in, he spoke of programs currently in place that prepare students entering Pembroke Academy and current NECAP test results. He stated there has been significant growth in the district over the past 12 years and that the majority of Pembroke students are successful.
2. The legalities of and the ability to replicate the Sakai website learning initiative were discussed. Mr. Warburton has followed up with the IT Coordinator who is extremely confident in the safety, content and monitoring of the program. Additionally, he has been in contact with an attorney and is waiting for a response regarding any possible liability issues. It was suggested that Sakai may only be helpful for those classes where the teacher is willing and able to spend time outside of class observing and participating in the web site conversations.
3. An update was given on the healthcare proposal that was voted on by teachers. Mr. Warburton explained that each vendor gave a presentation and that LGC's alternative program would have created savings for both the School District and the employees. However, the vote by the union members was to leave the insurance coverage as is.
4. Regarding the increase in the nurse's salary line, he stated that the increase is due to 25% of this salary being included in special education last year but is now shown at 100% in the nurse salary line for the coming year.

Estimated Revenues show an increase of over 10%. Significant increases are shown in the Adequate Education Grant, Catastrophic Aid, ECIA Chapter I & II and Tuition. The concern is that the proposed increases for the coming year will have a substantial impact the following year should these numbers significantly decrease causing a large increase in the tax rate.

It was stated that the Adequate Education Grant will stay the same for the 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 school years by current law, but that could be changed by the legislature any year. However, the Catastrophic Aid may decrease for the 2010/2011 school year due to less Special Education expenses projected for next school year. SAU staff stated that future cuts in funding for programs covered by ECIA Chapter I & II would not affect the tax rate since there would be equal reductions in expenditures for those specific programs. Dave cautioned that this may not be true.

The concept of setting aside funds this year (causing a slight tax increase) to offset a possible substantial increase in the tax rate the following tax year was raised again for discussion. Several options were reviewed but it was the general feeling of the committee not to ask the School Board to move any expenses from two years out into the proposed budget for the coming year. However, the option of increasing the possible addition to the Special Education Reserve Fund out of any higher than expected surplus at the end of this school year will be explored and presented at the next School Board meeting.

The tuition revenue amount on the page listing all Revenue projections was stated by SAU staff to be accurate and inclusive of a 5% attrition factor. The Tuition Revenue Estimates page originally submitted to the Committee should not be used as it has an inaccurate total. Available capacity at Pembroke Academy was stated by SAU staff as increasing slightly this coming school year. Three Rivers and the two elementary schools were stated to be able to handle many additional students if necessary without adding teachers or classrooms. They also pointed out that Three Rivers could add additional classrooms without increasing the Library, Auditorium or lunch area space due to proper planning at the time it was built.

Lunch sales were briefly discussed. It was stated this item is neutral on the tax rate as the expense equals the revenue. The meals coordinator for the School District was praised for her ability to run a good program at modest cost.

A tour of the wood chip burning plant at Merrimack Valley could not be scheduled this week. Plans are being made however for a tour on Thursday, January 29th at approximately 10 AM. Details will be sent to committee members via e-mail.

Gerry stated he has received the Town Warrant and suggested that it be available for the next meeting since it includes the proposed Warrant Articles. Fred agreed to e-mail it to committee members.

The next budget meeting is scheduled for January 29, 2009 with the purpose to initiate deliberations on both the School and Selectmen's budgets combined.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.