

**Andover School Committee**  
**Regular Meeting of March 30, 2010**  
**School Administration Building - School Committee Room**

**Members in Attendance:** Chair-Dennis Forgue, Richard J. Collins Annie Gilbert, David Birnbach, and Paula Colby-Clement

**Others in Attendance:** Dr. Claudia L. Bach, Superintendent, Dr. Susan M. Nicholson, Assistant Superintendent, and Interim Business Manager Bernie Tuttle

**I. Regular meeting in the School Committee Room**

**A. Salute to the Flag**

Chairman Dennis Forgue called the meeting of the School Committee to order at 4:07 P.M. Mr. Collins asked for a moment of silence in memory of Tracy McNulty a dearly loved teacher and Learning Specialist who passed away on Monday. The moment of silence was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**B. Preliminary Budget for FY-2011**

Chairman Forgue outlined the budget options available which include: 1. approval of the Superintendent's Recommended Budget; 2. voting a higher budget number; 3. voting a lower budget number; 4. not voting a budget number. Should the Committee decide to not vote on a budget number, the Preliminary Budget number would be published in the Finance Committee Report with a written statement explaining that the School Committee has yet to vote on an agreed number. This option would provide additional time before Town Meeting to receive updates on the budget model, clarification of IDEA money, and process information received at the State House meeting today.

Annie Gilbert, David Birnbach and Paula-Colby Clements attended the meeting at the State House and also met with State Representative Barbara L'Italien and State Senator Sue Tucker who were very helpful in responding to questions. They confirmed there would be a 4% reduction in Chapter 70 Local Aid, cautioned us there could possible midyear cuts if the liquor tax is repealed or the sales tax cut back, and they are pursuing attempts to freeze tuition rates for Out-of-District Special Education placements. They were told by Representative L'Italien and Senator Tucker that the Federal Stimulus funds for Special Education will not be reallocated and will go directly to the municipalities. Although it is still not clear how these funds can be used, they will find out and let us know. The assumption for Circuit Breaker reimbursement for FY-11 is about 40% from the State. The Senate budget won't be out until April/May.

Chairman Forgue opened the meeting for public comments:

AHS Teacher Matthew Bach, 163 Glenwood Road in Malden, approves of Option 2 voting a higher budget number which would benefit everyone. He also considers the ideas put forward by the School Committee for reduction of the budget to be severe. An expedient decision on Option 2 would send a clear message to the community about where this School Committee stands on education.

Marj Andresen, 85 Argilla Road said she attended the Community Focus Group and none of the three options presented today were put forward by any of the participants. These cuts represent a step backwards in education and she is asking the three Boards and most especially the AEA to work

together and focus on what's at stake and to stand for the children. Bonnie Zahorik, 2 Granli Drive commented on the 2008 Town Survey which revealed 56% of the residents who responded chose the Public Schools as the single most important factor for moving and/or staying in Andover, 29% Town Services, and 35% for geographical location. If we want to continue to realize new growth we need to choose Option 4. The three Boards should be working collaboratively on the budget. Dennis Forgue noted that the Team 470 sub-committee has scheduled a series of meetings to work collaboratively on the budget.

AHS Teacher Patrick Patterson, Ipswich, MA commented on the virtual classroom concepts stating it may work well for adults but young people lose the 1-1 contact and the opportunity to properly engage students in quality conversations. He feels we should replace the current School Committee. Christine Banter, 15 Gavin Circle has a 5<sup>th</sup> option to offer. She suggests splitting the budget and presenting two numbers to the Town. Remove the Special Education Out-of-District Tuition Costs and Transportation Costs and add it in as a Fixed Expense on the Town side. 1% of the population is driving the dollars for education in the Town. Charlie Smith, 7 Porter Road stated that removal of Foreign Language from the Middle Schools undermines the ability of the High School to deliver an education in Foreign Language and changing from the block schedule would undermine what we are spending education time on.

High School Students Sean Crompton, 11 Noel Drive and Evan Price, 104 Argilla Road reported on the results of a survey conducted by students on the Block Schedule; 61% of the students in support of keeping the block schedule because it allows for additional teaching time, 75% of the students felt the block schedule provided more time for detailed in-depth study, and 65% felt better prepared for college using the block schedule. The block schedule affords students many more opportunities. High School Teacher Laura Hajdukiewicz said the results of the student survey showed an overwhelming support for keeping the block schedule and she pointed out that 20% of the teachers have never taught in a 5 x 7 schedule, so all teachers would need significant professional development time to redesign their courses. Laura's experience with Virtual High School courses offered at AHS about 5 years ago was that it failed. She encourages the School Committee to stand behind Dr. Bach's budget. AHS English Teacher Josephine Golden, 62 Carmel Rd, said AHS said the School Committee is charged with maintaining and improving the school system.

Diane Costagliola, Belknap Drive feels option 4 may seem like a good choice but it disturbs her because it puts the School Committee in a bad light with the other Boards. The community needs to understand that the School Committee supports the educational budget. A 'no' number vote is not telling the community what you want them to believe in. Stand behind the Superintendent and go with her recommendation.

Bob Willard 76 Tewksbury Street feels there are three main areas for cuts to be put on the table, Elementary, Middle and High. He suggests we eliminate all athletics and clubs which would save about \$800,000. It does not directly affect education and could be funded through the Booster Clubs. Mr. Collins said eliminating all athletics would be a disaster; all extra-curricular programs are beneficial to students.

Kerri Adams, 9 Flint Circle said if the State and Federal Special Education mandates not covered fully funded and which are putting pressure on the school should be budgeted as fixed assets.

Annie Gilbert feels more due diligence needs to be done and she is not ready to take a position at this time. However, she would like to support the current Superintendent's Preliminary Proposal because it represents a stake in the ground or a stake representing what we are working towards. We have to have a starting point and we have to do things differently. The School Department has worked with the Town on several areas over the past few years. We can't alone come to the table arbitrarily with the AEA, we can't work with the schedule unless we can talk collaboratively with teachers. We need help from the Town and the Teacher's Union. Eighty-eight percent of the budget costs are wrapped up in teacher salaries and expenses. All improvements suggested are constrained by the teacher contracts; we need to include teachers, we need teachers to work collaboratively with us.

David Birnbach agrees whole-heartedly with Annie's comments. Every workplace has gone through the some budget constraints and being creative to get by. This budget lacks creativity. He would like to challenge us to find areas of creativity to reach consensus on, make investments in new areas, and to re-prioritize. He feels strongly that athletics is important, and supports the need to double up on investments and have companion coached teams on the academic side that are equal in stature and stipends to athletics. His recommendation is for Option 4.

Mr. Collins vigorously opposes any attempt to reduce budgets or programs in the schools.

Paula Colby-Clements feels more comfortable having a number to work with but does not want to send a message that "this number" will be "the number". She still has a lot of questions but agrees we have to be more creative in the delivery of services in a fiscally conservative way – but we have to have a number to work from. She feels comfortable supporting the Superintendent's Preliminary Budget.

Dennis Forgue added that the high school schedule is not a debating issue of the block itself, but the option to revert back to a 5 x 7 schedule to control costs. There are still many economic decisions to be made so at this time he chooses to not vote a number, and feels it enhances our negotiating position. Going forward he is looking for ideas from all areas of the community.

Annie Gilbert emphasized that by going to a motion to vote the Superintendent's Budget number does not mean we are done. We need and expect cooperation from everyone and hopes all stakeholders will come to the table.

**Motion:**

Annie Gilbert motioned to recommend approval of the Superintendent's Preliminary Budget in the amount of \$63,779,211 for the FY-2010-11 School year. The motion was seconded by Paula Colby-Clements, voted 3-2 and approved. Dennis Forgue and David Birnbach voted no.

**Adjournment**

On a motion by Annie Gilbert with a second by to adjourn by David Birnbach it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 5:50 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dee DeLorenzo, Recorder