

**Andover School Committee**  
**Minutes of Budget Workshop, Monday, March 29, 2010**  
**School Administration Building - School Committee Room**

**Members in Attendance:** Chairman Dennis Forgue, Annie Gilbert-Secretary, Richard Collins, Paula Colby-Clements, and David Birnbach

**Others in Attendance:** Dr. Claudia Bach, Dr. Susan Nicholson, and Interim Business Manager Bernie Tuttle, Elementary School Principals Liz Roos, Patty Barrett, Moira O'Brien, Colleen McBride, and Pamela Lathrop

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Dennis Forgue opened the Work Session at 4:07 P.M. in the School Committee Room. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the School Department Budget for FY-2011.

**II. The Budget**

Using the October 1<sup>st</sup> numbers, Bernie Tuttle gave a presentation on the current enrollment at the elementary schools and information on what the class sizes would look like if the projected class size for FY-11 exceeded the mid-point enrollment, and the number of teachers that could be reduced by increasing class size at each elementary school. The total reduction in teaching staff would be 9.5 classroom teachers at a base of \$47,000 each for a savings of \$437,000 with a decrease in Specialist hours for a savings of \$96,600 resulting in a net savings of \$533,600 (travel time for Specialist not factored in). Dr. Bach discussed the kindergarten class sizes and said some schools will see full-day classes capped this year.

The Elementary Principals gave a presentation on the importance of class size and how critical it is at the elementary level especially for the youngest learners, and parents, teachers, and administrators consider it their number one priority. Moira O'Brien talked about the positions that have been eliminated over the past several years and how those reductions continue to negatively impact students at the elementary level. There are concerns about safety issues especially on the playground and in the cafeteria without fewer staff available to supervise the children. Currently, Grades 4 & 5 at Bancroft, Grades 3 & 5 at High Plain, Grades 1 & 4 at Sanborn, Grades 4 & 3 at South, and Grades 2-5 at West Elementary all exceed the School Committee Policy's mid-point level. Colleen McBride spoke about the diverse needs of students in each classroom and the importance of looking at students as learners and not as numbers. Pamela Lathrop talked about the benefits of smaller class sizes and increasing class size over 25-26 students will significantly impact the quality of education. There will

be 62 sections exceeding the midpoint level in FY2010-11 with 1,550 children affected if the School Committee raises classes above the mid-point.

When class size is reasonable teachers are able to differentiate instruction and give individualized attention and small group instruction more effectively. There are more opportunities for increased communication between students and teachers, children feel more connected and students learn faster. Teachers can more frequently assess students and modify instruction, employ a different style of classroom management. Smaller class sizes allow for a heightened level of student participation and enthusiasm. Referral rates for special education are lower and retention rates are lower with smaller class sizes. Parents are more involved and there is more frequent communication between parents and teachers. Also, smaller class sizes provide more space and visibility. The principals included a schematic of a grade 5 classroom with 20 students compared to what a classroom would look like with 28 students.

The School Committee discussed the effects of the school environment with fewer teachers and larger class sizes with the elementary principals. When asked what the effect of fewer teachers would have in the school environment, the elementary principals responded there would be the possibility of the potential for an increase in special education classes, increase in shared space, and a reduction in supervision. When asked what would happen if the Assistant Principal position at West Elementary was eliminated, Liz Roos responded that having the Assistant Principal allows the opportunity for the principal to be more involved in IEP meetings, conduct evaluations, to be more of an instructional leader than a building manager. West Elementary also established a special needs pre-school class this year which has a 1-1 staffing ratio. The West Elementary Assistant Principal also spends time at South School assisting Dr. McBride.

When David Birnbach asked the principals if they would consider shifting from what we currently do today to areas they feel need to be improved upon. The principals referred him to the hand-out distributed earlier and they stressed the need to have resources put back that have been taken away. If the School Dept invested in an additional Assistant Principal it would allow them to attend more team level meetings, have more time for instructional learning, attend IEP meetings, support teachers, and be more involved as well as more time to follow the Daggett Model to focus on teaching and learning to move forward with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills with more support in place. Patty Barrett pointed out that

supervision and evaluation, and professional development for teachers are both critical elements for growth and development.

David Birnbach asked the principals their thoughts on changing the teaching model to having more assistants and fewer teachers, investing more on training instructional assistants at a lower cost, with small group breakout sessions. Could this model work?

Dr. McBride said the level of responsibility would be greater for the instructional assistants and teachers would be further removed from students. Dr. Nicholson spends a good deal of time meeting with the elementary principals and from her viewpoint the biggest hurdle for them is time, time to balance all the instructional items, manage their buildings and time to have conversations to plan ahead. The K-5 elementary staff is working on end-of-year math assessments, writing scope and sequence, teacher evaluations, piloting foundations, the wellness program, integrated arts and the e-Progress Report all of which are overseen by the Elementary Principals. Dennis Forgue said demands on people's time are an important point.

Annie Gilbert believes the Elementary Principals need staff support so they can be instructional leaders and alterations need to come through contractual changes which will not solve our FY-2011 budget problems.

Dennis Forgue is meeting with Kathy Fink on Tuesday morning to review the projections for the out-of-district Special Education for next year and report back to the School Committee with the results of the meeting. The School Committee is attempting to understand the budget numbers in order to effectively advocate for the schools.

David Birnbach said Andover needs to have more STEM initiatives and would like to look at investments in academics similar to athletics; he would like to see a balance in those investments and believes the community would support this initiative.

### **III. Warrant Articles**

#### **WA #P-10-E Contracts in Excess of Three Years**

Annie Gilbert motioned to recommend approval of Warrant Article 10-3 Contracts in Excess of Three Years. The motion was seconded by Paula Colby-Clements and unanimously approved.

WA #P-10-F Accepting Easements

Annie Gilbert motioned to recommend approval of Warrant Article 10-F Accepting Easements. The motion was seconded by David Birnbach and voted 4-0-1. Paula Colby-Clements abstained.

WA #41 P-21 School Building Maintenance and Renovation

Annie Gilbert motioned to recommend approval of Warrant Article #41 P-21 School Building Maintenance and Renovation. The motion was seconded by David Birnbach and unanimously approved.

WA #54 -Zoning By-law Amendment - Height of Municipal / Educational Buildings

Annie Gilbert motioned to recommend approval of Warrant Article #54 -Zoning By-law Amendment - Height of Municipal / Educational Buildings. The motion was seconded by Paula Colby-Clements and unanimously approved.

**II. Adjournment**

On a motion by Annie Gilbert and a second by Paula Colby-Clements, the School Committee unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 6:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo, Recorder