

Fact Sheet - FY 16 APS School Budget

*Sources: SC Chair's Letter – 2015 ATM Finance Committee Report
FY 2016 APS Preliminary Budget – Executive Summary, and School Committee Budget Presentations February – April, 2015 – www.apsl.net - School Committee -> Budget Updates*

1. How did the School Committee (SC) arrive at its recommended budget of \$73,296,591?

This budget, which was recommended by the SC last January and which now has been approved by the SC by a vote of 4-1, represents a 3.37% increase over the FY15 budget for the Andover Public Schools. It was designed to match the Town Manager's January 15th preliminary allocation to the schools. It also reflects the average percentage increase to the school budget over the last five years. This budget is lower than the amount originally requested by the Superintendent and will require a reduction of 4-5 full-time equivalent staff (FTE) due to a number of factors, including: significant increases in utility costs; increases in costs for out-of-district special education placements; the addition of 10.2 FTE due to special education and English Language Learner caseload increases and legal mandates; and the need for a modest investment to move the District's strategic initiatives forward. The SC feels that this budget, while requiring some cuts, is responsible, both fiscally and educationally.

2. What is the Board of Selectmen's (BoS) recommended school budget?

Following the Town Manager's preliminary allocation to the schools described above, the Town Manager released his FY16 proposed budget on February 6th; it reflected a new reduction to the tax levy requested by the BoS that resulted in a budget of \$72,873,529 for the schools. This number, which is being recommended by the BoS, represents a 2.78% increase over the School Department's FY 15 budget and is \$423,062 less than the amount recommended by the SC. It will require a reduction of 10-11 classroom teachers.

3. It has been reported that the School Committee wanted an additional \$280,000 above the BoS recommendation added to the school budget. Why is it now looking for an additional \$423,062?

\$280,000 was an amount requested by the SC in an attempt to find a compromise budget prior to Town Meeting. The BoS declined to approve that request. As a result, the SC is bringing a budget proposal to Town Meeting (\$73,296,591, a \$423,062 increase) which we feel is more responsible, is well within the Town's tax levy limit, and which will allow the district to more closely maintain class sizes by saving additional teachers. This request matches the FY16 preliminary allocation given by the Town Manager on January 15.

4. Wasn't Andover looking at laying off more than 21 teachers? How did that change?

In early March, the Superintendent presented a staffing plan that matched the budget allocation preferred by the Selectmen (\$72,873,529). That plan required layoff of more than 21 classroom teachers. Since that time, additional information has been solidified by the district including: turnover savings (projections for the number of retiring teachers, leaves of absence, etc.), projections for out-of-district expenses (requirements for special needs education students schooled elsewhere), and high school course selections which drove number of classes. Additionally, the schools intend to save approximately \$117,000 through reduction of some planned spending for innovation and professional development, and position consolidation. These refinements and new assumptions total approximately \$683,000, which allows Andover schools to keep approximately 11 of the 21 teachers previously targeted for layoff.

5. Will there be a net increase of teachers across the district next year and, if so, how is this the case if teachers are being laid off?

No matter which budget passes at Town Meeting, Andover will need to layoff classroom teachers, 10-11 under the BoS-recommended budget and 4-5 under the SC-recommended budget. At the same time, Andover is required to hire more than 10 employees to meet legal mandates. These positions include 7.5 special education teachers, 1.0 English as a second language teacher, 0.2 human resources assistant, 1.0 custodian, and 0.5 crossing guard. The SC also is recommending the addition of 2.2 FTE for strategic plan initiatives because it believes that it is important, even in times of constrained resources, to continue to invest in the District's strategic initiatives. Accordingly, the proposed budget includes 1.2 FTEs for digital learning specialists in the elementary schools and 1.0 FTE for a project-based learning coach in the middle schools. The net result may be a positive add, but in any current scenario the number of classroom teachers will decline.

6. Why can't the school budget be increased beyond \$73,296,591 in order to avert even more layoffs?

At Town Meeting, any citizen can propose an amendment which would increase (or decrease) the school budget. However, the SC believes that a budget of \$73,296,591, while it does require some staff reductions, is one that appropriately balances numerous competing factors. It meets our legal obligations; it moves us modestly forward on our strategic plan; it is consistent with increases in the school budget in recent years; and, it is well within the Town's tax levy limit and is thus affordable. The fact that this budget is affordable is evidenced by the approximately \$250,000 in health insurance savings which the Town expects, and which the BoS approved on April 27th, as a result of changes which will be made in the health coverage for Town and School employees. If the school budget recommended by the SC is approved at Town Meeting, the Town's unused tax levy capacity will stand at approximately \$1.5 million.

7. Why do all the layoffs have to be of teachers?

The SC looked at this question and, in particular, considered whether some reductions could be made from program coordinators or other administrative accounts. While recognizing the importance of maintaining reasonable class sizes, the consensus was that a reduction in our

program coordinators would have a significantly negative impact on students. These coordinators play a critical role in providing instructional support and professional development to our teachers; they are responsible for curriculum improvement in both regular and special education; they coordinate our high school guidance, social worker, and nursing programs; and they evaluate and mentor all faculty in accordance with the new state guidelines. In addition, it should be noted that Andover already ranks relatively low in the amount of money spent on these type positions. Andover ranks 23rd out of our 31 peer districts in the percentage of per-pupil costs spent in this category. In other administrative positions, Andover ranks even lower, at 28th out of 31.

8. What impact does the teacher contract that was negotiated last year have on these layoffs?

The proposed budget includes funds for teachers that were negotiated as part of a collective bargaining agreement agreed to early last year - before the Board of Selectmen changed course from prior years and made a decision to tax below the levy limit. FY16 will be the second year of this three-year agreement and will reflect a 2% cost-of-living increase. The proposed budget also reflects the costs associated with step, track and longevity increases. The total cost for these increases for all bargaining units and non-union positions is approximately \$2.4 million. This is a significant cost. However, in addition to the BoS's change in tax strategy, a number of other factors are worth noting: 1) these increases keep our teachers' salaries competitive with those in surrounding communities and in communities to which Andover compares itself; 2) Andover's per pupil expenditure remains only slightly above the state average and in the middle of the pack among surrounding communities and the communities to which we compare ourselves; 3) the salary increases and structures of the contracts in the School Department are consistent with those in other Andover Town departments; 4) the COLA's are consistent with the COLA's received by Social Security recipients; 5) an important concession was obtained in the most recent teacher's contract regarding the definition of middle school teaching time; and, 6) over 70% of our employees are on the "top step" of the teaching ladder and no longer receive step increases.

9. Are there other school-related warrant articles of which the voters should be aware?

The SC is recommending approval of the following school-related warrant articles:

- a. Article 25 - \$1,950,000 - High School Library/Media Center Renovations
- b. Article 31 - \$ 337,000 - Town and School Energy Initiatives
- c. Article 35 – Shawsheen School – Legislative Petition
- d. Article 37 - \$ 250,000 - AHS Track Replacement
- e. Article 38 - \$ 600,000 - Safety and Security Communications Upgrades
- f. Article 39 - \$ 455,000 - School Building Maintenance and Renovation
- g. Article 40 - \$ 319,000 - West Elementary School Site Improvements
- h. Article 41 - \$ 402,393 - Annual Computer Workstation & Laptop Replacement Program