

## **CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**

### **School Department Budget**

April 24, 2008 – 6:30 p.m.

Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

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City Council Present: Mayor Ferrini, Assistant Mayor Blalock, Councilors Novelline Clayburgh, Dwyer, Smith, Kennedy, Spear, Reynolds and Pantelakos

Staff Present: John P. Bohenko, City Manager; Judie Belanger, Finance Director; Dianna Fogarty, Human Resources Director; Dr. Robert Lister, Superintendent, Steven Zdravec, Assistant Superintendent; Steve Bartlett, School Business Administrator and Kelli L. Barnaby, City Clerk

School Board Members Present: Dr. Mitchell Shuldman, Chair; Brendan Ristaino, Vice Chair; Sheri Ham Garrity, Kent LaPage, Rebecca Emerson, Lisa Sweet, and Leslie Stevens, Members

School Board Members Absent: Dexter Legg and Ann Walker

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#### **I. Call to Order**

Mayor Ferrini called the work session to order at 6:30 p.m.

#### **II. Introduction**

City Manager Bohenko said we are here this evening to receive a presentation regarding the School Department budget. He announced that a reconvening of the Public Hearing of the Budget will take place on May 12, 2008 with the Final Budget Review Work Session on May 14, 2008. City Manager Bohenko said that adoption of the budget is anticipated to take place on June 2, 2008.

#### **III. Presentation – Robert Lister, Superintendent of Schools & Mitchell Shuldman, Chair of the School Board**

Dr. Lister thanked the City Council for allowing them to make their presentation this evening. He spoke to the mission of the School Department which is as follows:

*“The purpose of the Portsmouth Schools is to educate all students by challenging them to become thinking, responsible, contributing citizens who continue to learn throughout their lives.”*

He outlined the 2008 School Board Objectives:

- Create 5 year plan for program/curriculum development
- Create strategic plan in technology
- Creates Special Ed Task Force for program and cost saving recommendations
- Communicate middle school needs with clarity and transparency
- Develop quality educational metrics index
- Develop specific strategies for improving communication and community relations
- Collaborate with other city departments on cost saving initiatives

Dr. Lister reviewed the Guiding Budget Principles to be:

- Personalized Education
- Reasonable Class Sizes
- Support for Core Subjects
- Response to State & Federal Mandates
  - No Child Left Behind, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, State Standards, Course Competencies, Grade Level Expectations, Follow the Child
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Technology Skills

Assistant Superintendent Zadravec spoke to the Performance Measures:

- State Assessments
  - Marked improvements in Grades 3-8
  - Established baselines well above state averages in 11<sup>th</sup> Grade NECAP in Reading, Math and Writing
- Dropout Rate – 1.7% (19 Students)
- Power Standards in Reading
- Benchmark Assessments
- Collaborative Work

He reviewed the NECAP testing for Grades 3-8 as well as Grade 11 with the City Council indicating that we are above the State average. He spoke to the value in making students learn and excel in there educational needs.

Dr. Lister advised the City Council that we are above the dropout rate, and in 2006-2007 the rate was 1.7% with NH percentage at 3.2%. He identified challenges the School Department faces as being:

- Rising Class Sizes  
PHS Math, (English & Foreign Language),  
PMS Grade 6, Little Harbour Elementary Grade 5
- SPED (Special ED) / ESL  
435 Coded Students (16% of Total Students)  
100 504 Students  
42 ESL Students Speaking 17 Languages
- Business Requirement
- Technology & Integration
- Student Mobility

He advised the City Council that the current enrollment for the 2007-2008 breaks down as follows:

<u>PEEP</u>	<u>K Only</u>	<u>K-5</u>	<u>Middle</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Total</u>
64	168	999	532	1,097	2,692

Business Administrator Bartlett spoke to the costs of special education and the impact on the School Department budget. He also addressed the work done to reallocate funds in order not to come before the City Council for a special appropriation. In addition, he reviewed the Cost Center 207 History with the City Council.

Dr. Lister addressed reorganization for FY 2007-2008 with the reduction of:

- 1.0 CTE Teacher
- 1.0 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher
- 1.0 PMS Guidance

He said there was an addition of 3.0 Kindergarten Teachers.

Reorganization for FY 2008-2009 include a reduction of:

- 0.7 Peer Mediation
- 0.5 CTE Position
- 1.0 PHS Sped
- 1.0 PMS Sped
- 1.0 Elementary Teacher

Additions include:

- 2.0 Para positions
- 1.0 PHS Math
- 1.0 Sped ASD Teacher
- 0.5 PMS Sped
- 0.5 PMS Reading Intervention

Dr. Lister addressed additional resources for FY09 to move forward:

- Technology Replacement Cycle
- Library Media/Technology Integrator
- Grade 5 Teacher – Little Harbour
- Business Position – High School
- Paraprofessional
- Address changes in Special Ed funding

He said that the School Department continues to explore costs saving initiatives with the exploration of sharing City resources, energy costs, and the creation of a special education task force. He said that 82.8% of the budget reflects salaries and benefits for a total budget of \$35,182,995.00 or a 2.5% increase.

#### **IV. Questions and Discussions**

Councilor Smith spoke to the difference under FTE's on page 222 of the budget for paraprofessionals with the number represented on page 8 of the presentation provided this evening. He said page 8 indicates there were 46.47 paraprofessionals for 2008 and page 222 lists 41.35 paraprofessionals for 2008. Business Administrator Bartlett advised the City Council originally there were 41.35 paraprofessionals for 2008 but with the reorganization in 2008 there were actually 46.47 paraprofessionals.

Councilor Dwyer said that the budget presented this year is much clearer and easier to understand. She said that the position summary schedule should include all the positions not just those in the general fund. City Manager Bohenko said next year the Finance Department will work with the School Department on that matter. He said there will be an addition of a section to address that issue and all non general fund positions.

Councilor Dwyer spoke to Cost Center 207 and asked if the School Department views this as a stabilization fund for what you think will be needed on an annual basis. City Manager Bohenko said there are two ways to handle the fund if it is not spent, it could come back to fund balance or transfer it back into the special education fund.

Councilor Smith inquired as to the utilities expenses for the PASS Program at the Sherburne School. Business Administrator Bartlett said that the Sherburne School is an older building and therefore utilities costs are higher.

Councilor Raynolds asked if the School Department would consider looking into the budgetary impact of going with more sustainable options for food service.

Councilor Novelline Clayburgh thanked the School Board and Administration for the outstanding test courses and for working with City staff to eliminate the school deficient last year. She also addressed funds raised through PTA's and PTO's.

Councilor Kennedy asked where the School Department is with transportation contracts. Business Administrator Bartlett said the transportation contracts expire in June 2009. Dr. Lister informed the City Council that negotiations will start next year for the transportation contracts and they will look at transportation with sustainable practices.

Councilor Dwyer said that the School Department is asking for a 2.5% increase but that does not include the COLA adjustment which could be 4%. She encouraged the School Department to look towards combining services with the municipal side. Councilor Dwyer said that the School Department may not see a savings the first year but will as the year's progress. Dr. Lister said the School Department is reviewing combining services with finance and maintenance. City Manager Bohenko said we will look at combining systems in the finance area. He said that we may not save a great deal of money but we could create some cross training. He advised the City Council in FY10 we will be looking at field maintenance.

Councilor Spear asked if the School Department could be included in the IT upgrades and replacements next year. City Manager Bohenko said that this appendix came late in the process and the School Department will be included in the list next year.

Dr. Shuldman spoke to the collaboration between departments. In addition, he spoke to the large number of computers required for the School Department and advised the City Council that the High School requires more computers than the entire City purchases for departments.

Councilor Reynolds said he would like to receive information regarding fund-raising for the schools from outside resources.

Councilor Smith said he would like to see Central Offices moved to City Hall. He also inquired as to why the PASS Program is located at the Sherburne School. Dr. Lister said that the PASS Program is for students that failed in High School and function differently.

Kent LaPage, School Board member spoke to the combination of services with athletics. He said that funds raised by the boosters are assisted by Business Administrator Bartlett.

Lisa Sweet, School Board member addressed the 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Little Harbour School and said it is more of a reallocation of a teacher from Dondero School and the requirement of an autism teacher this year.

Councilor Pantelakos said it is a good idea for an accounting of funds received from PTA's and PTO's. Leslie Stevens, School Board member said funds raised by outside organizations must be filtered through the schools.

Councilor Spear said he was pleased with the NECAP results and asked how to compare those scores with other districts. Assistant Superintendent Zdravec said they review those scores and look at measuring progress with their goal.

Dr. Lister provided the City Council with a sheet outlining the percent of students attending 2-year and 4-year college programs with New Hampshire schools, Exeter, Winnacunnet, Dover and Oyster River. He reported in 2005-2006 Portsmouth had 75 students going on to attend 2-year and 4-year college programs.

Councilor Spear spoke to the objective quality matrix and would like to see how that develops performance measures. He asked how many students meet the needs of the School Department and how many students have their needs met by the School Department.

Councilor Dwyer suggested that the School Department move slowly with technology upgrades until the 5-year plan is further developed. She also requested that the School Department do some creative thinking on where the PASS Program could be moved to provide more cost effective savings.

Councilor Kennedy asked how many of the paraprofessionals serve students one on one versus serving individual classrooms. Dr. Lister said that number changes and he could provide the information at a later date.

Mayor Ferrini said any information that is provided from the School Department on questions asked by Councilors be forwarded to City Manager Bohenko for distribution to the entire City Council.

Kent LaPage, School Board member said that the City Council needs to consider the PASS Program carefully. He advised the Council that it costs \$40,000.00 per student to move the student outside the City and the City currently has 13 students. Councilor Kennedy said it appears that the PASS Program is sustaining itself. Business Administrator Bartlett said that the Program is sustaining itself.

Mayor Ferrini thanked the School Department, School Board, teachers, parents and students. He said that the Council is looking at a goal to provide value education for all students in the Portsmouth School System.

## **VI. Adjournment**

At 8:30 p.m., Mayor Ferrini declared the meeting closed.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kelli L. Barnaby, CMC/CNHMC  
City Clerk