

Dover-Sherborn Regional School Committee

February 23, 2009

Sherborn Town Hall

Minutes

In session with Dover Warrant and Sherborn Advisory Committees

Members present: Richard Robinson, Ellen Williamson, Clare Graham, Rainie Pearson, Bev Madden, Nate van Duzer

Bev Madden and Clare Graham, assisted by Richard Mathieu, gave a slide presentation on the budget, including some highlights of the schools and the assumptions and budget drivers behind the FY10 budget. Statutory assessment figures from the state for FY10 were used for the assessments.

There was extensive discussion of out-of-district special education placements, which are not included in the regional budget, but instead are paid for by the two towns separately. Ms. Spriggs noted that such placements occur after extensive case-by-case review, keeping in mind educational mandates and attempting to minimize costs.

SPED

Ruth Chamberlin of Sherborn highlighted as concerns SPED costs (both OOD and in-district), the new circuit-breaker funds protocol, the need to manage class size, and the control of health insurance.

Because of MCAS reporting requirements, circuit breaker SPED funds will be flowing from the state to the district, instead of directly to the towns. This money will be earmarked for the appropriate town as it arrives. Vendors will bill the region and the appropriate town, allowing the region to pay those costs until the funds are exhausted.

Caroline White of Dover asked how the town comparisons of per-pupil expenses included SPED OOD expenses. Follow-up will be forthcoming.

E&D

The region is planning to use \$400 K from E&D in FY10, higher than last year. Discussion centered on whether the region is budgeting a “structural surplus” which allows it to maintain such a large reserve, and whether it would be appropriate to reduce the amount in E&D and turn more money back to the towns. The history of the fund was reviewed, noting that early in the Perry Davis era, the fund was deficient, and that during the building process, it was a reserve for unanticipated expenses. It continues to serve that purpose, and is the only contingency fund available for emergencies such as fire, roof damage, severe winter, or unanticipated legal fees.

Other Issues

Class size was brought up as an area of potential savings. While the average class size has remained relatively constant over the past decade, it was noted there are many classes

with relatively few students, owing to small AP classes, scheduling difficulties, and intensive work with students who lag behind their peers.

Health insurance continues to be expensive. Smaller copays could help, but at the moment are contractually locked in.

Ruth Chamberlin noted that Sherborn is looking for \$500 K in cuts in the town budget, and would know more about how much to ask for from the Region in a couple weeks. Dover is behind Sherborn in their budgeting process, but faced a similar situation. Ms. Spriggs said that further cuts would begin to affect education.

Lawrence Rubin of Sherborn raised the bond allocation issue. Ms. Williamson replied the school committee is grappling with the issue now.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Robinson