

JOINT WORKSHOP
CITY COUNCIL AND SCHOOL BOARD
CITY OF SOMERSWORTH, NH
JANUARY 23, 2012

Mayor Spencer opened the workshop at 6:00 pm and those assembled around the table introduced themselves; Mayor Spencer, Councilors Hebert, Durkee, Soldati, Sprague and Witham and School Board members Bolduc, Cowan, Perkins, and Austin were in attendance, as well as Superintendent Mosca, City Manager Belmore and Deputy City Clerk Brellis.

City Manager Belmore handed out a paper which offered a breakdown of both the City budget, (total= \$41,449,112,) and the tax rate, (total= \$27.83,) and also the Net Assessed Valuation, (\$841,726,136.) (For purposes of discussion, every \$84,000 appropriation would have an impact of 10 cent per thousand on the tax rate.)

School Board Chair Don Austin said that he appreciates this opportunity and finds this a useful format for preliminary discussions. He distributed a sheet outlining the increases to the School Department budget that he anticipates for FY 2012-2013: \$2,050,000. He commented that the CIP request of \$893,000 is included in this figure. He knows that the \$2M+ probably won't be approved but thinks it is important to present their needs in order to know where they are starting from.

He listed \$505,000 of fixed increases for jobs; (**\$202, 000,**) benefits; (**\$143,000,**) and 4 SPED paraprofessionals; (**\$160,000,**) which could fluctuate with an increase or decrease in the number of students. They are asking for increases for the following: Bus; (**\$58,000,**) Food Service Van; (**\$20,000,**) and Minimal Building increase; (**\$374,000,**) for a total of \$452,000. With the CIP request of **\$893,000** and **\$200,000** for Contract Negotiations Contingency, the Board sees an approximate increase of \$2,050,000. He added some detail about each of these requests stating that the School Board believes they need all of these. They are bringing the CIP budget forward now because the infrastructure is affecting their ability to educate students.

Superintendent Mosca thanked Chairman Austin for his presentation and said they are here to answer questions.

Councilor Witham urged vigilance with regard to the aging infrastructure, suggesting that they break it into manageable chunks. He hopes that if they need to reduce these increases, they don't immediately attack that line.

Councilor Pepin asked if any federal money would be coming back to the community.

Chairman Austin said that the only reimbursement would be catastrophic aid (spec. ed.) and that it is not realistic to expect that.

Councilor Pepin asked about the new law for parents who want (alternative) subjects. He understands that parents supply materials. What about instructors?

Chairman Austin doesn't know how much would be born by the School.

Superintendent Mosca said that there are two conflicting RSA's and she thinks the legislation will be challenged.

Councilor Sprague asked about the windows and HVAC which comprise the CIP increases.

Board member Cowan said that they are 35 years old and inefficient, etc, etc. There was an audit about 1 ½ years ago, and they have been trying to find an inexpensive (solution) for about 7 years.

Councilor Sprague wonders why they have not agreed to the free energy audit, (Thermal Imaging.) He would like to see that \$893,000 number not exist. That would be a big reduction in this budget increase. ...He said that the School Board could run with this.

Councilor Witham asked if the HVAC units were part of that last energy audit.

Mr. Austin answered that it was.

Mayor Spencer asked for a copy which Mr. Austin agreed to provide.

Councilor Soldati doesn't believe the Council should second guess the School Board on this; the Council can offer guidance as to how much they are willing to increase the budget but then defer to the School Board...

Councilor Pepin doesn't want to cut the budget but he looks at the taxpayer's side also, saying that there is no way that he can go with this much of an increase.

Councilor Witham likes to articulate where he would cut, saying again that they need to address the CIP items whether through free services, floating bonds, etc, etc. Be vigilant throughout deliberations, he said, to produce a final number which captures educational/facility/ taxpayer needs.

Don Austin said that these numbers are not close to final; they will present the budget to the public on 02/07/2012 and have a public hearing after that. Their goal is to provide the best opportunity to succeed that they can reasonably afford.

Councilor Durkee talked about transparency to taxpayers before stating that education brings in new people; they should consider this an investment not a cost.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:47 pm.