

CITY COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP  
CITY OF SOMERSWORTH, NH

March 28, 2011  
6:00 P.M.

Acting Mayor Tapscott opened the workshop at 6:00 pm. Present were Acting Mayor Tapscott, and Councilors Pepin, Watman Spainhower, Messier, Witham, Jarvis and Sprague. Councilor McCallion and Mayor Soldati were absent.

After being introduced by the Acting Mayor, City Manager Robert Belmore reminded everyone that the City Council will review the budget in detail at the workshop scheduled for Saturday, April 9, 2011 at 8:30 am. He also mentioned the Public Hearing on the proposed Budget will be held on Monday, April 11, 2011 at 7:00 pm. He said that these (meetings) will be televised on Channel 22, our Comcast station. There will then be a Budget Ordinance introduced by the City Council that will require two readings and final adoption by the City Council before the end of June; otherwise the City Manager's proposed budget would become law.

The City Manager thanked all the department heads for their cooperation and assistance, and particularly the Finance Director, Scott Smith, for all his efforts. He then extended his appreciation to all the department heads and their staffs, saying that they (the department heads) are all here this evening.

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**Please refer to the pages that follow for the substance of both the City Manager's and the Superintendent's budget presentations.**

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At the conclusion of the City's presentation and then the School's presentation, given by Superintendent Dr. Robert Lister, Acting Mayor Tapscott opened the workshop for questions from the Council regarding the School budget.

Councilor Spainhower said that the presentation of this budget is the best he has seen. He thought it was similar to the City and easy to read.

His questions are as follows:

- On Capital Improvement layout, he asked if that was the same as the special projects. He would like to see those broken down, it was confusing to him.
- Hilltop and Idlehurst: Special education Fund- Main Stream coaches. Curious about salaries. He was told that there was no decrease in staff. They were moved from building to building.

- Tuition went up \$106,000. Instead of 30 children being placed out of district, there are 35. Students are repositioned to different buildings.
- Maintenance Contingency Fund. Why do we need \$44,000 for a brand new school?
- What is the special project at the new school? \$10,620.
- High School. Adding ROTC tuition. Why? He doesn't think we should add positions in this economic time. He was answered that it was added on the recommendation of the principal. (Councilor Witham clarified that this would be for tuitioning students to a school that had this program.)
- High School. School Administration Services. Increase in salary of \$11,000. Why?
- District wide. Professional services. Staff Development Contract. \$28,000. Why? What do they do?
- Support services. Contract tech support went up a lot. Why that big jump?
- Main Street coaches. Shifting personnel. He is not for adding an assistance principal at Idlehurst. He said where we haven't appropriated money yet; he does not consider that found money. Does that mean that the \$50,000 for special needs is now not needed?

Councilor Watman clarified that the Superintendent was going to propose to the Board that an assistant principal position be created. And he did not indicate that that would affect the budget requested in any way, so he said, you must have in mind a source of funding.

Superintendent Lister said that this would come out of Special Ed money; tuition money that they scheduled for students sent out of district that they will not be sending out of district. There are fewer students going out and they would like to use that money. Councilor Watman said that if the Board does not accept the recommendation, then it would be safe to assume that the budget as proposed could be reduced by that amount. The Superintendent said that the School Board has accepted his recommendation.

Councilor Watman asked about projected revenues as of this date. He wants to be sure that when they take a look at the School budget and the City budget that it makes a difference when you project the revenues. Might it be different because the school is trying to keep track of the latest proposals with the legislative delegation? Mr. Lister said they are looking to generate as much tuition and revenue as they can. What they have in the presentation is what they have "to date." Councilor Watman wants to be sure when they look at things, they are looking at the same period of time, because if there is a shift it might have an affect on decision making.

Councilor Witham concurred with Councilor Spainhower that, although this is only his second budget, it provides more clarity than in the past. He said that:

- He would like this- school employees, compiled as a whole. How many full-time? Part-time? Teachers? Main Stream? Custodians? (Etc.) Anyone employed. He'd like that data set carried back three to five years: 2006/7 on up. So they can

see trends. (Superintendent Lister said that employees sometime work in more than one building and overlap in different schools, so it might look like a double count, but they can identify who those people are. But be aware of that.)

- CIP items. Asbestos abatement at the Middle and High Schools. He asked if this takes care of the problem in its entirety. (No. Those are for certain high traffic areas.)
- In the budget summary, the graphic, under salaries includes transportation. He was told that it didn't, that was included under purchased services.
- Cost per pupil category: it strikes him that pre-school and kindergarten costs are well in excess of the state average. Why is that not calculated into the overall cost per pupil? He guesses that it is because these programs are not mandated by the State. (The Superintendent said that is the main reason.) The Councilor thinks it would be helpful to see what the cost per pupil would be if that were added in. Pre-k through 12. It was clarified that it is included in "elementary."
- Councilor Witham clarified that the Governor's proposed budget is not reflected in the City Manager's budget.

Councilor Sprague said that the School Building Aid from the State is supposed to be 100% funded. The State contributions for retirement will be zero from the State, last he heard.

He asked a question on the district wide portion. What is the SAU 56 assessment? Who does it? Why has it increased \$80,000 from two years ago? The Superintendent said that it is the testing of students. They have three psychologists who work for the district. The Superintendent joked that this is where he uses his lifeline. "Ask a friend," Councilor Sprague joked back.

Marie D'Agastino, SAU 56 Business Administrator, answered that it is administrative costs and overhead to run the SAU office, 83% of the total. 17% is paid through the Rollinsford School District. She said that the calculation is based on average daily attendance as well as value of properties and values in Somersworth have decreased while the values in Rollinsford have increased. So some of that cost has shifted; Rollinsford has picked up a little bit more.

Councilor Sprague asked about the School Resource Officer/ Truant Services- \$101,000. Marie D'Agastino answered that that is based on actual salaries and benefits for those two positions. They pay for a portion of those salary and benefits. Councilor asked how busy the truant officer is.

Councilor Spainhower asked about the liabilities of retirees. The scuttlebutt where he works is, if they are making us pay for more of our health care and retirement, it might be an easier time to retire now than wait until later. Have you run a number on that, he asked? Considered how many teachers are going to leave if they have to pay more out of their own pocket.

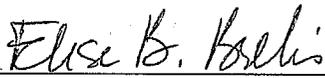
Superintendent Lister said they don't have any yet who have stepped forth and said that they want to retire, although there has been some talk.

Councilor Witham asked if there is an accrued liability reserve fund for the School Department. They do not, was the answer.

Councilor Watman thanked them for the memo that lists possible reductions in staff and services that would be necessary if the Council reduces the budget. He thought that was very helpful. He found the statement that during the last five years approximately 27 positions have been lost for the district. Will you put that in percentage terms, and also school enrollment for that same period into percentage terms, he asked.

Acting Mayor Tapscott declared the workshop closed at 7:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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Elise B. Brellis, Deputy City Clerk