

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

School Department Budget

Monday, May 10, 2004 - 6:30 p.m.

Conference Room A

City Council Present: Mayor Sirrell, Assistant Mayor Hanson, Councilors Grasso, Ferrini, Marchand, Hynes, Reynolds, and Whitehouse

Officials Present: John P. Bohenko, City Manager; Judie Belanger, Acting Finance Director; Peter Torrey, Lyonel Tracy, Bob Lister; and Diane McGee, School Department; School Board Members Kent LaPage, Nancy Novelline Clayburgh, Henry Hayward, Ann Walker, Raimond Bowles, John Lyons, and Charles Vaughn

Mayor Sirrell called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

City Manager Bohenko said that over the last seven years the School Department has stayed within the budget guidelines. He said that the department has averaged a 3.1% increase over the last five years and has stayed at or below the consumer price index.

Kent LaPage spoke in support of budget and noted fixed costs are 7.25% of the budget. He discussed the renovations at the High School.

Superintendent Tracy said that last year was extreme with the 0% increase but students still received a valuable education.

Business Administrator Torrey overviewed the schools activities and provided an outline of the budget figures. He informed the Council that special education costs have increased by \$150,085. Superintendent Tracy said that more aides are required now than in the past.

Assistant Mayor Hanson suggested that the School Board consider doubling the cost for students to park their vehicles at the High School as it would be an incentive to ride the bus.

Councilor Marchand said he has received calls from the public asking that the foreign language be added back into the elementary schools. Kent said that the program was cut last year because of budget constraints with the 0% increase and has been added back into the elementary schools. Councilor Marchand said that he would like more money added to the foreign language line item for the elementary schools. Councilor Reynolds said he shares the views of Councilor Marchand. He asked what the difference is in funding foreign language at the high school level compared to the elementary schools. Peter said that it costs approximately \$350,000 to provide foreign language at the high school. Councilor Reynolds said that the high school is receiving ten times the amount of funding for foreign language.

Councilor Ferrini asked where the teacher's salaries fall in comparison with other communities. Lyonel said before the new five-year contract the salaries were extremely below other communities but now our salaries are competitive for the seacoast area.

Mayor Sirrell that the City Council could only vote on the bottom line of the budget.

At 7:45 p.m., Mayor Sirrell closed the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by: Kelli L. Barnaby, City Clerk