

Timberlane Regional School District Budget Committee
Atkinson, Danville, Plaistow, and Sandown

Regular Meeting
March 27, 2008
7:25 p.m.

SAU 55
Plaistow, New Hampshire

Call to Order:

Mr. Balanoff called the meeting to order at 7:25 p.m.; attendance was taken.

Roll Call:

Present: Mrs. Zerba, Mrs. Suech, Mr. Mullen, Mrs. O'Neil, Mrs. Lambert, Mr. Balanoff, Mrs. Collie, Mrs. Winn and Mr. Mascola.

Absent: Mrs. Quigley.

Approval of Minutes:

Mrs. O'Neil made a motion and was seconded by Mrs. Suech to approve the minutes of February 7, 2008 as written. Vote: six – yes, three-abstain Mrs. Zerba, Mr. Mullen and Mr. Mascola. The motion passed.

Chairman Balanoff had to leave the meeting to attend a school function at 7:45 p.m. Vice Chair O'Neil took over directing the meeting.

Mrs. O'Neil reported that she checked the Budget Committee email and did receive three. The first was a request for information regarding cost per student which Mrs. O'Neil referred them to the NH DOE website. The second email was an invitation to the Distance Learning Family Night at Atkinson Academy. The third email was from Mr. Mullen asking when the first meeting of the Budget Committee was. Mrs. O'Neil stated it was March 27, 2008 7:00 pm at the SAU office. The email process for this year was discussed and Mrs. O'Neil volunteered to check for emails on a regular basis. It was agreed that if a pressing email came in she would forward it to the Chair.

Mrs. Zerba reported that she attended a "Transitions Meeting" at the Middle School. Mr. Stokinger explained that the "Transitions Committee" organizes the "move up" day for the kids who are changing schools such as from elementary to middle. Mrs. Zerba also stated that Mr. Woodworth was in attendance and discussed the negative feedback regarding the NECAP scores.

Mr. Mascola reported that at the next school board meeting, committee assignments would be discussed and he is volunteering to remain as the Budget Committee Representative.

Mrs. O'Neil reported that once again the voters in Danville did not support the school budget but did vote in favor of the warrant article.

Mr. Mascola stated he hoped the Community Relations Committee would become a force for the school district to help get information out to the voters.

Mrs. Lambert stated that she would volunteer to be the Budget Committee representative to the Curriculum Committee while Mr. Mullen volunteered to be the alternate. Mrs. Zerba and Mrs. Suech will remain on the Facilities Committee. Mrs. Collie and Mrs. Winn agreed to be on the Safety Committee. Mrs. O'Neil, Mrs. Suech and Mrs. Zerba are still interested in serving on the Strategic Planning Committee and have not been invited to any meetings as of yet, even though they know there is some preliminary work going on at the school levels. Mr. Balanoff will remain as the representative to the Technology Committee with Mrs. O'Neil as the alternate.

The discussion regarding televising the Budget Committee Meetings was raised. Some members stated they believed that the "Proposed Budget Presentations given by Administration" in the fall are the meetings which need to be televised and the normal Budget Committee meetings are probably not as useful. The question came up regarding the additional costs to televise the meetings and Mr. Stokinger replied it should be just for one person to tape the meetings. The equipment is already in place at the PAC and in the SAU Board room. Mr. Mullen volunteered to encode the taped meetings for free so that it can be made available on the internet as well as the TEN network. He stated that if taxpayer money is used to record the meetings, then it should be available at all times for taxpayers to watch and not just on the TEN channel program lineup. Mr. Mullen was told that his services would have to be approved by the School Board and the Technology department. The Budget Committee does not have any authority in this area. Many Committee members expressed a desire to record aspects of the facilities tours in September also. People need to see the areas we are seeing that are desperate for attention.

Mrs. Suech made a motion and was seconded by Mrs. Lambert to televise the Proposed Budget presentations by Timberlane Administrators in the fall.

Vote: Unanimous.

Mr. Stokinger asked Mr. Mascola to discuss the School Board Orientation meeting that Mr. LaSalle had with the School Board. Mr. Mascola stated the meeting was helpful to review all the basic policies and procedures of the School Board and noted that they are always reminded that they are only a School Board Member during a School Board Meeting. All the rest of the time they are a parent/citizen. Mr. LaSalle also sets goals for himself and the District. The School Board performs annual evaluations for Mr. LaSalle, Mr. Feneberg and Mr. Stokinger.

Mr. Mascola stated he wished he was more knowledgeable on Fund Accounting and Budgeting. He was wondering if there was a statewide Budget Committees Association that may have resources to help Budget Committee Members. Mrs. O'Neil stated there wasn't as she has already tried to find such an association. Mrs. Zerba stated she would like to compare Timberlane's expenses to other Districts that are similar to ours. How do we compare for money spent on Curriculum etc. Additionally the Committee would like a one page fact sheet with some basic stats regarding Timberlane, to be able to answer questions when asked by the public. Teacher salaries not being tied to performance was discussed and how could that be addressed in the next Teacher contract negotiations. Mr. Stokinger was asked to prepare some data with visual aids such as pie charts etc for the meeting in April and to do some other basic training the Committee wants to know, such as what other districts spend vs. their NECAP scores etc. The Budget Committee members had a lengthy discussion regarding how best to perform their duties and the best way to help the District improve the quality of education. Mrs. O'Neil volunteered

to draft a letter to the Mr. LaSalle, Mr. Coker and Mrs. Ralph inviting them to the April 10, 2008 Budget Committee meeting to discuss in an informal manner, issues that concern the Budget Committee. The questions will be submitted in the letter so the invitees have a chance to prepare and understand what issues are on the Budget Committees minds. Some of the questions raised where: What is the role of the Budget Committee within TRSD? How can the Budget Committee help improve TRSD? Are our salaries competitive enough to attract and keep the best teachers possible? When will the Strategic Planning Committee become more of a driving force? Budget Committee members on this committee have not been included in any discussions or planning for this committee. What is the district going to do about the poor NECAP scores, SAT scores, low college admissions? How can the Budget Committee help to improve these? Can we get a breakdown/pie chart of where our expenses are going? For example, administration, curriculum, supplies, utilities, etc. Where do you think we should be spending more and where do you think we can be spend less? How does our spending breakdown compare to other school districts of comparable size? The PPS budget is very large. Is there any way to reduce this budget? We know that an administrative position was removed this last budget year, but is there more that can be done? Is TRSD “top heavy” with administrators, especially at the High School and Middle School? The Middle School teams: are they working? There is an observed disparity of the amount of homework between the teams. Why? Why are students watching TV during class times? For example, a class at the High School was watching “The Apprentice” every week? Why are high school students given time to do their homework in class everyday rather than being taught new material or reviewing material? Is the district going to incorporate more teacher accountability in the next teacher contract? Mr. Mascola stated we can’t blame all the poor scores on just the teachers or the facilities etc. Parents need to be very involved too. There is no magic cure and this is a very complex problem. Mrs. O’Neil made a motion and was seconded by Mrs. Winn to meet on April 10, 2008 contingent upon the availability of Mr. LaSalle to attend.

Vote: Unanimous.

The Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Smith
Recording Secretary
Approved 4/10/2008