

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

JOINT MEETING OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AND FINANCE  
COMMITTEES

SCHOOL DEPARTMENT BUDGET  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 2003

Present from Finance Committee: Ald. Coletti (Chairman), Ald. Gerst, Ciccone, Bullwinkle, Stewart, Schnipper, and Lipof.

Absent: Ald. Parker

Present from Programs and Services: Ald. Johnson (Chairman) Ald. Sangiolo, Coletti, Fischman, Merrill, Lipsitt

Absent: Ald. Gentile, Parker

Other Aldermen Present: Ald. Linsky and Baker

Present from School Department: Jeffrey Young (Supt.) School Committee Members: Marc Laredo, Dori Zaleznik, Nancy Levine and Anne Larner  
Also Sandy Guryan, Judy Malone, Carol Daynard, and Carolyn Wyatt

REFERRED TO FINANCE AND APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES

#168-03 HIS HONOR THE MAYOR, in accordance with Section 5-1 of the City (#124-02(11)) of Newton Charter, submitting the FY04 Municipal/School Operating Budget totaling \$256,208,165, passage of which shall be concurrent with the FY04-FY08 Capital Improvement Program, submitted in October, 2002. EFFECTIVE DATE OF SUBMISSION 4/22/03.

ACTION: **FINANCE APPROVED SCHOOL BUDGET 7-0  
PROGSERV APPROVED 4-0-1 (Sangiolo abstaining, Lipsitt not voting)**

NOTE: Chairman Johnson convened the meeting and introduced members of the School Committee and School Department who were seated in the Chamber. She then turned the meeting over to her Co-Chair, Ald. Coletti of the Finance Committee. The first public speaker was Superintendent of Schools, Jeffrey Young. He handed out a six-page pamphlet, which highlighted the School Committee's FY04 Budget. He stated that the School Department's immediate goal is to maintain classroom instruction levels and to that end it is going to require an across the board restructuring of the entire system. He claimed that the major factors driving the school budget this year and any year would be the outcome of contract settlements with employees, preservation of classroom instruction levels and dealing with fixed and mandated cost increases. In the contract

settlement category the School Committee is faced with the following basic obligations: to engage in collective bargaining with all unions; to determine step and grade level changes within the workforce; to deal with the increased cost of employee benefit packages, and dealing with turnover savings.

The Superintendent also went line by line describing the department's efforts to preserve classroom instruction at the elementary, middle school, high school, and special education levels. He stated that the School Department has always had to deal with fixed and mandated cost increases which include transportation contracts, the cost of unemployment compensation, the increase in utilities, particularly heating costs over the past winter and matters of tuition involving special education needs.

He further showed slides on the overhead projector dealing with what he termed restructuring initiatives which includes a reorganization at the administration level, reducing professional development offerings, consolidating literacy services and, the elimination of a number of classroom aides. Also under consideration is the reduction in the number of Enrichment Coordinators as well as Assistant Department Heads at the high school level and reduction of middle school Assistant Principal slots. Also reflected in this budget is the combination of custodial/maintenance staffing, the consolidation of special needs services, bidding of the Food Service Contracts and the implementation of transportation fees.

The Superintendent presented an overview of the financial history of the School budget revealing in FY2000, the budget was over one hundred million dollars and the budget figure rose 6.3% the following year (F01) 4.8% (FY02) and the biggest leap occurring in FY03 where there was a 10.2% increase. The Superintendent seemed pleased, therefore to present this FY04 School Budget at a mere 2% increase over FY03 with the total budget figure at over 127 million. He brought up the question of the recent tax override approved by the voters and stated that a number of school related costs were sustained by this measure reflected in class size, the literacy initiative, the parameters of charter maintenance, technological innovations, and increased text book and material funding. The Superintendent called upon Sandy Guryan, Assistant Superintendent Business/Finance who touched upon potential enrollment figures and their impact on class size ratios. In response to an alderman's question, she revealed that there would be approximately 62 pupils who will be ultimately housed in the Avalon Complex on Needham Street, based on certain real estate data. She admitted that if the entire 62 students were assigned to the Countryside School that based on pupil projection enrollment figures, there would not be any further need for modular classrooms.

Chairman Coletti praised the Superintendent and members of the School Committee as to how this year's FY04 School Department Budget was formatted. He said that this budget reflected drastic changes in how all of this material was presented explaining that, in his

opinion, this budget was a much easier read and as he put it, the answers to many, many questions raised over time came right up off the pages.

Superintendent Young explained that as recent as last summer, the School Committee formed a sub-committee to deal with revamping and restructuring the department budget format. After many meetings the Superintendent was pleased with this end product and said he hoped that the aldermen would be pleased as well.

Ald. Coletti stated that he felt that tonight's presentation allowed for a full discussion of the School Department budget and said that if any other aldermen had any other questions, their concerns can be brought up at the first Committee of the Whole session scheduled for next Wednesday, May 28<sup>th</sup>.

Marcia Johnson, Programs and Services Committee Chair then took the podium and called for a motion to adjourn this joint meeting at 9:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Johnson, Chair