

COMMITTEE ON NEWTON'S COST STRUCTURE (SCHOOLS)

Scope and Method of Work

Our committee has had one meeting. We have collected a treasure chest of data including enrollment projections, class size reports, and budget proposals. We plan to analyze this data for potential efficiencies and for possible new and/or increased revenue streams. The data categories we will zoom in on are:

- Staff Compensation
- Teacher Load
- Administration (size and cost)
- Maintenance and Repair
- Capital Spending
- Fees
- Enrichments
- SPED
- Class Size
- Administrative and Financial Practices with an exploration of innovative ideas and alternative approaches

While other categories might be added, these are the "big rocks" we will look under. We will use benchmarking and correlation studies, where appropriate, to guide our recommendations. We plan to coordinate with the Revenue Structure Committee with respect to revenues on the school side of the house.

Additional Agenda Items and Methodologies

In addition to the kind of data analysis outlined above, we think that another productive lens for assessing the reality and possibilities of Newton's school operations is one that detects "formulations" that we hear, believe, or pick up through our contact with the public, school staff, teachers, union representatives or municipal employees. "Formulations" are theories, hypotheses, and/or assumptions that people hold about the Newton Public Schools and are related in some way to the financial underpinnings of the school budget. Our initial thought is that if we can develop a list of these theories (or formulations) and then provide the information that either confirms, disputes, or provides a more complex view of the topic, we might assist the schools in addressing areas where the public has either incorrect or incomplete information or possibly, a legitimate concern or idea that needs to be acknowledged. An example of such a "formulation" and one that we use only as an illustration of a belief is, "Newton has too many administrators. Money can be saved and quality would not suffer terribly if we could consolidate administrative services."

Finally, we are beginning to develop an outreach protocol that once finalized, will be employed starting this summer, to interview members of various constituencies throughout the city, so that we might understand their perspective on the arenas listed above.