

School Board Faces Tough Budget Choices

By David Hewitt

Andover School Board

The five members of the Andover School Board have been diligently working since October of last year to formulate a budget to submit to the voters at the annual School District Meeting.

Historically, the School Board has attempted to keep budget increases within a 1% to 2% increase over the previous year's appropriation. Often unanticipated expenses do occur, such as the necessity to replace the school boiler last year. Additionally, there are occasional budgets where we are required to spend additional monies to insure that Andover's youngsters are provided with the best education possible.

The School District works carefully to insure that funds are spent wisely. In fact, in fiscal year 2003-2004 the School District returned \$272,483 in surplus funds to the Town.

The Andover School District is very fortunate to provide an excellent curriculum for our students. An outstanding and highly professional staff presents this curriculum.

In order to comply with the Federal mandates contained in the recently enacted No Child Left Behind Act, the School District is required to both maintain our curriculum and employ highly-qualified, certified educators. To fail to do so could result in Andover's loss of some or all of the many tens of

thousands of dollars of Federal education funds we currently receive.

As was reported in last month's issue of the *Beacon*, this year's total school budget proposal reflects a 7.4% increase over last year's school budget. As you will see, virtually all of these increases are the result of costs that are unavoidable. A description of the increases and their impact on the total budget follows:

- Employee benefits rose 2.47 % due to rising insurance costs.
- Special education rose 2.25% due to increased tuition and transportation costs for special educational programs.
- Teacher salaries rose 1.74% based on the three-year contract we recently negotiated.
- Bus transportation rose 0.20% in the first year of a new five-year contract.
- High school tuition rose 1.26%. This was the planned increase in the second year of our five-year contract with Merrimack Valley High School.

The above five areas alone reflect a total increase to the budget of 7.92%. The School Board was very concerned about this large an increase. In an effort to keep the budget increase as low as possible, the School Board looked for areas in which it could decrease or eliminate costs.

The School Board made the difficult decision to abolish both the French lan-

guage program and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training during the next year. It was also forced to deny the following staff and administration requests:

- No upgrade of the Computer Lab.
- No replacement gym mats.
- No additional fence repairs.
- No funding for a part time custodian.
- No upgrading the art teacher from three days a week to full-time.
- No upgrading the guidance counselor from three days a week to full-time.
- No funding for any of the items on the school's infrastructure wish list, including things like a walk-in refrigerator and freezer to save

money on food purchases; window shades for classrooms; door locks to meet current school standards; and upgrades to the gym floor.

These are just some of the many difficult decisions that the School Board has made in our attempt to remain fiscally responsible while at the same time insuring that all of our 383 students in kindergarten through high school receive the best educational opportunities possible.

The School Board strongly encourages every voter to attend and participate in the upcoming School District Meeting. Remember, in an attempt to improve attendance, the meeting has been changed to Monday, March 7 at 7 PM at the Andover Elementary/Middle School.

TOWN MEETING SEASON

By Charlie Darling
Beacon staff

Town Meeting season is upon us. Here are the dates you need to keep in mind in order to participate in the important decisions facing our town this year.

Saturday, February 26 – The 2004 Town Report will be distributed by the Andover One Wheelers at the East Andover Post Office and at Lake Sunapee Bank. If you don't pick up your copy on Saturday, it will be mailed to you. The Town Report is distributed automatically to resident Andover property owners, and to others upon request.

Monday, March 7 – Andover School District Meeting, AE/MS Gym, 7 PM. The custom in years past would have put this meeting on Saturday, March 5, but in response to a request made at last year's meeting, the School Board is trying a weekday evening in an attempt to have better attendance.

Monday, March 7 – Andover Village District Annual Meeting, Andover Town Hall, 7 PM.

Tuesday, March 8 – Voting for:
• Selectman (1 seat)
Andy Guptill, Bob Ward
• Budget Committee (2 seats)
Bill Bardsley, Ed Hiller

- Library Trustee
Marilyn Gould
- Trustee of Trust Funds
Mary Lou McCrave
- Cemetery Trustee
- School Board
Vicky Mishcon
- School District Moderator
- School District Clerk
Christie Coll
- School District Treasurer
Ann Clark

Voting takes place at the Andover Elementary/Middle School Gym from 11:30 AM to 7:30 PM.

Tuesday, March 8 – Andover Town Meeting, Andover Elementary/Middle School Gym, 7:30 PM.

Tuesday, March 15 – East Andover Fire Precinct Annual Meeting, East Andover Fire Station, 7:30 PM.

Wednesday, March 16 – Andover Fire District Annual Meeting, Andover Fire Station, 7:30 PM.

Town Matters

The *Beacon* needs volunteers to help gathering town news. If you can help, call Charlie at 735-6099

R.P. JOHNSON & SON

SUPPLYING THE BUILDING NEEDS TO NEW HAMPSHIRE HOMES SINCE 1901

MARVIN WINDOWS AND DOORS



Superb
Showroom



An outstanding
5,000 sq/ft collection
of windows, doors,
cabinets, countertops,
kitchens and baths.

R. P. JOHNSON & SON YOUR COMPLETE HOME & BUILDING CENTER
Andover, NH 735-5544 www.rpjohnsons.com

Mail@AndoverBeacon.com



LakeFarm.com
AndoverArea.com

Your Neighborhood Experts

For information call

735-5444

AndoverBeacon.com