

**District from page 10**

MS has a full-time physical education teacher. School Board member Charlie McCrave replied that our physical education teacher works four days per week. Mike suggested that with this many grades in AE/MS, we should have a full-time physical education teacher.

The moderator read aloud through the budget almost to the end with no further questions, comments, or debate from the meeting.

At the Wage Pool (Support Staff) section, Howard Wilson asked for an explanation of the concept. Charlie McCrave explained that the \$5,000 figure represents 2% in raises among the support staff. Because Andover pays less to its support staff than other school districts, Charlie indicated that most of the pool would probably go to those who are paid the least, in hopes of keeping them at AE/MS rather than losing them to higher-paying districts once we've trained them.

Toby Locke asked about the \$82,000 in federal funds shown in the District's estimated revenue (which offsets \$82,000 in the Federal Projects line item in the budget). "Is that money guaranteed, or just expected, and where would the difference come from if the feds don't send the whole amount?"

Charlie McCrave said that the amount is expected, not guaranteed, but that it's pretty certain and hasn't caused a problem in past years. If it weren't to

arrive, we'd have to figure out how to make up the difference.

Toby expressed frustration that "the feds make us follow all these rules, but they only give us \$150,000 out of our \$4 million budget." Andy Guptill pointed out that we're only getting 4% of what the feds promise toward special education and asked whether we can mandate that they give us what they owe us.

**Warrant Article 6**

**To see if the School District will reduce its expenditures by 10%.** This warrant article was submitted by petition.

The discussion shifted to Article 6. Howard Wilson spoke first as the lead petitioner, pointing out the importance of restoring the value of the dollar.

School Board member Kent Armstrong made a detailed PowerPoint presentation on the impact a 10% reduction would have on the proposed budget, which he said is so lean that it contains no contingencies.

The presentation pointed out that over half of the \$4.3 million budget (55%) is mandated by the state or federal government. To cover those mandates, the government provides about 3.6% of the budget.

If Article 6 were to pass, the 10% reduction couldn't touch the 55% of the budget that is mandated. The rest of the budget would have to be reduced by almost 23% to achieve the overall 10% reduction that Article 6 calls for. That reduction would have to be applied primarily to the Regular Educa-

tion, Administration, Support Services, Athletics, and Library sections of the budget.

Peter Zak asked, "If the state reduces its retirement contribution, would the extra cost come from the school budget or the town budget?" District Superintendent Mike Martin answered that we'd have to consider all options.

Toby Locke wondered aloud, "If we don't hold the line now, when will we?" He said that Andover lost 12 properties this year from its tax base and that 15 foreclosures had been started. "We're not attacking children; we're attacking teachers' salaries. Everywhere else is going down, like Wisconsin."

Lynn Baker, a teacher and former Andover School Board member, pointed out that the AE/MS teachers are not receiving raises this year. "I can't hold the line at the gas station – that's the reality. As taxpayers, we all have to cut back so we can pay our taxes."

Jim Delaney: "Every other school district has laid off teachers and workers. I'm not recommending that, but the school board is not doing all it can to reduce the budget."

Donna Baker-Hartwell: "Some New York City schools are cutting teachers, but that means they have to put 60 kids in a classroom."

Percy Hill: "I think the budget is way too low. Over the years we've reduced the fine arts, cut three staff, had contracts with no pay raise and no step. You can't get any lower than this without just closing the school and sending the kids somewhere else."

Wood Sutton: "I don't like to pay taxes. But I went to school, and now it's payback time. If we don't attract families to Andover who will volunteer on the rescue squad and the fire departments and on Town committees and local organizations, it will cost one hell of a lot more than this school budget."

Paul Currier: "AE/MS has been a great school and has shown great cost constraint over the years. We need to continue to have a great school in Andover."

Article 4 – the budget – passed on a voice vote. Article 6 – to decrease the budget by 10% – failed to pass on a voice vote. The meeting voted

unanimously to limit reconsideration of Articles 4 and 6.

**Warrant Article 5**

**To approve the cost items in the proposed teachers' contract.** The contract contains no new cost items for the 2011-2012 school year. It contains \$28,949 in increases for salaries and benefits in the 2012-2013 school year.

School Board member Katie Keyser pointed out that because the "evergreen" state law was repealed in Concord two weeks earlier, the note in the warrant about the new contract remaining in effect until a new contract is agreed upon is no longer true.

Jim Danforth: "I'm concerned about the pay raise two years out since the budget is so lean."

Toby Locke: "I do not approve. I haven't had a raise in years. Teachers won't go elsewhere because they can't get the same pay because of steps."

Andy Guptill: "We've got a lot of people losing their homes in town. To commit to a two-year contract with raises is taking a risk with the budget so slim."

Mary Anne Levesque: "The big company I work for is laying off 1,200 people; we've had no raises, and medical insurance is up 30%."

Bill Keyser (a member of the Budget Committee): "I think it's a fair contract, but I'm having second thoughts. We won't know until summer about state aid. I cannot vote for a two-year contract."

Jim Delaney: "With oil above \$100 per barrel, they're predicting \$5 per gallon for gas by summer. The state has cut what I'm provided at Pine Haven to take care of my residents. I recommend a one-year contract."

Toby Locke asked, "What happens if we vote down this article?"

Katie Keyser explained, "Everything stays the same as this year: no raise, no step. And the School Board and the teachers' union have to go back to the negotiating table."

Heather Hill: "Insurance has gone up, so teachers are taking home less. A step increase two years out is about \$1,000 for each teacher after taxes."

Article 5 was adopted on a voice vote. The meeting was adjourned by 8:35 PM.



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