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School Board's Thoughts on the Annual School District Meeting

Grateful for the community's support

Dean Barker, Andover School Board

On Tuesday, March 1, residents of Andover gathered for our annual Andover School District Meeting to listen to, deliberate, and vote on the 2016-2017 school budget and other Andover Elementary/Middle School related warrant articles by the school board. On behalf of the board, we thank everyone who was present for this important yearly event for our town and school.

First, AE/MS eighth graders Vienna Marcus and Ruelle Jenifer thanked the crowd for their support of the school over the years, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Then, we were treated to a fantastic number from this year's AE/MS musical, *Suessical the Musical*.

After the customary votes on Articles 1-3, the heart of the matter was at hand: Article 4: to see if the town would raise and appropriate \$4,862,300 for the 2016-2017 AE/MS school budget. I started with a summary of how the budget process begins as early as October of the previous year by staff at AE/MS, how it was then reviewed and modified over a series of school board meetings, and then further scrutinized, modified, and ultimately recommended in additional meetings (including a public hearing) before the Andover Budget Committee.

School Board Vice Chair Mark Heller then reviewed the changes to

the budget from last year, totaling an overall increase of 2.59%. The far majority of the increases stemmed from additional special education needs (the expenses being a mix of services, tuition, and transportation). There were questions from residents concerning these expenses, as well as requests for clarification on high school tuition, both of which were addressed by Superintendent Mark MacLean. School Board Chair Michelle Dudek spoke to the recent transportation study underway and Budget Committee Chair Arch Weathers gave some additional remarks on the budget process. After these discussions, the school budget was adopted by the town.

A new two-year teacher contract (Article 5) was up next. A switch to a more consumer-driven health care plan for AE/MS staff drove down costs in this contract while still allowing room for AE/MS to be a little more competitive with salaries in the hiring process. Article 5 was adopted, which precluded the need to discuss Article 6, which was on the warrant in the event the previous article failed. Arch Weathers then briefly discussed the rationale behind Articles 7 and 8, which pertained to raising additional sums for the high school tuition (\$10,000) and special education (\$25,000) trust funds. Finally, Mark MacLean reported on the activities of the new Facilities Task Force, whose members represent a broad spectrum of the Andover community.

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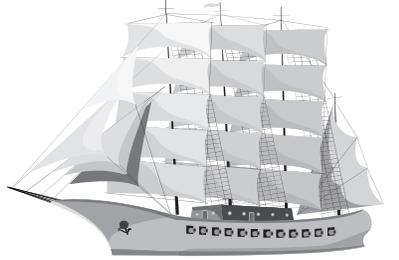
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To be included in next month's AYT, get your 30 words and optional photo to the *Beacon* by the 15th. Ads@AndoverBeacon.com • PO Box 149, Andover 03216 • 735-6099