

**TOWN OF LAKEVILLE**  
**Selectmen's Meeting Minutes**  
**January 27, 2014 - 10:00 AM**

On January 27, 2014, the Board of Selectmen held a meeting at 10:00 AM at the Town Office Building. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Belliveau at 10:04 AM. Selectmen present: Chairman Belliveau, Selectman Burke and Selectman Powderly. Also present: Rita Garbitt, Town Administrator, and Christine Weston, Recording Secretary. Interim Superintendent, Dr. Kristine Nash, Finance Director, Fred Baker and Michael Petruzzo, Chairman of the Lakeville Finance Committee. No one was recording the meeting.

**Meet with Interim School Superintendent Dr. Nash, Finance Director Fred Baker and Finance Committee Chairman Michael Petruzzo to discuss the FY15 Budget for the Regional School District**

Dr. Nash stated that there is a financial presentation already on the School District website, which had been presented to the School Committee on January 11, 2014. Chairman Belliveau was in attendance when this presentation was provided. The Superintendent distributed three (3) forms; Freetown-Lakeville Regional School District Preliminary Budget Information for Towns, Freetown-Lakeville Regional School District FY15 Level Services Budget Summary of Costs and Freetown-Lakeville Regional School District FY15 Additional Needs Budget Summary of Costs and provided an abbreviated version of the financial presentation. She stated that back in the fall she had met with the School Committee and had asked for direction on what type of budget that they wanted her to build. The School Committee asked for a level services budget and also an additional needs budget. They have not asked for the Superintendent to do a reduction budget.

The Level Services Budget was developed with the Administration Team. There are two (2) types of level services, minimum and recommended. The minimum covers contractual obligations. The recommended does not include new staff. It is not until looking at the additional needs budget do you see new staff. Dr. Nash then went over the two (2) level services budgets and the additional needs budget. This information was also provided to the Town of Freetown last week. The School Committee will be updated this week regarding any input and discussion that took place when meeting with each of the Towns. It was noted that the budget is an ongoing process. The level services budget includes the Steps for the teachers in the amount of \$294,069 and their COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) in the amount of \$287,279. Their contract is up to be renewed in 2015. The amount of \$126,844 makes up all other personnel such as; para professionals, secretarial, custodians, principals, administration, and the new Superintendent anticipated salary.

Dr. Nash then asked Mr. Baker to speak on the FY14 Budget Adjustment/Reduction in the amount of \$294,069. Mr. Baker explained that when the budget was built, everyone had looked at the actual as it existed, the staff as they were in place, and they were moved to where they had an increase in their steps and other contractual obligations. Since the present budget was adjusted, in a sense it was realized that there was a shortage in a lot of Special Ed staff and paras. The Region also did not fill \$550,000 of staff having to do with programs that were not implemented, and they were contractually not negotiated, and were not felt to be sustainable.

The deduction is the net between the two, which is the \$550,000 that was not filled, plus what was added. There is a breakdown sheet on that which follows behind the FY15 Level Services Budget Summary of Costs. Essentially, what took place was that Special Education positions were added and that meant that the total came out \$300,000 more than the present total. Dr. Nash explained that five (5) Department Head positions and three (3) Technology Integration Specialist positions had not been bargained. This had to be done. As the school year opened with the new Director of Student Services, it appeared that no one was looking at the IEP's (Individual Education Plans) in terms of the one (1) on one (1). Therefore, the Region had to bring back well over eleven (11) paras, so that cut into that money, which was about \$200,000-250,000. The School Committee voted to stop and put a hold on it in the budget. That is a onetime offset looking forward.

Then there are other contractual costs such as the Bristol County Retirement Assessment, Transportation Contract Increase, Sped Tuitions and Sped Contracted Services. Regarding the Sped Tuitions, this year's budget (FY14) was \$1.3 million for tuitions, the actual was \$400,000 more than that, and the circuit breaker is being used to offset that expenditure. Thus, the actual was \$1.6 million. Since, then, there have been a few more placements as a result, so it is growing. That is the difference of what is in the budget and the real cost for real students for next year which is \$1.9 million. The costs are going up, since there are students that require out-of-district programs that the Region does not have at this time and may want to consider starting up, if reasonably feasible.

There is also the amount of a \$62,000 placement that the Region inherited and is financially responsible for, since the parent lives in Freetown. DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) assigned the cost to the Region. The Region did send out an investigator/police officer to establish the residency. In this case, the Region is not able to determine the program for the student, so the Region simply pays for it. The Region will send its Special Educational staff to any meetings for the District in order to make sure that the student is in need of the program. There are also additional costs associated. At this time the Region is trying to build programs at the elementary level. There are a lot of elementary students that attend other districts for services. When a school district has a cohort of students 2, 3, 4 or more, it makes sense to build its own programs within the district. At this time the Region does not have strong programs in the elementary grades, as there are in other grades, thus the Region has a need to build them, in order to keep the students in the district. It has been a pattern to outsource students early on, however, it is difficult to bring the students back into the District. At this time the Region would not be able to build programs for the deaf and hard of hearing, however, there are cognitive, behavioral and autistic programs that can be built to retain students in the Region. The 18+ program law requires Regions/Districts to provide services to students until the age of 22. The Region is internally able to do that, since it has reorganized staff. An involuntary transfer was done and will also be done next year at the High School. Further information on this topic was provided by Mr. Baker.

Ms. Garbitt asked if the Special Needs Program (LEAPS) was still being offered at Assawompset Elementary School (AES) which had initially been funded by the Town of Lakeville. Dr. Nash stated that there is not a substantially separate program at AES. There is at FES (Freetown Elementary School) however, it is not really an all-around emotional, behavioral and autism program. Dr. Nash indicated that she did not know why the LEAPS program had

been eliminated. Mr. Burke stated that it had been an early intervention of sorts, to retain kids in the District, since it was cheaper to provide their services than to send them out-of- district. Dr. Nash stated that you typically do not want to put little kids on a bus and send them out-of- district. As soon as you get a cohort of students you have quality control. You don't, if they are going out-of-district. The Region needs to look at all its students, however, that takes lots of hours and meetings. Also, this year is the Director of Student Services first year in the District. A culture can also be created where the students who are not disabled are working with those who are, and this leads to a culture of nurturing. Mr. Baker stated that the Region is projected to get \$420,000 in funding. There were contracted services for Special Education that should have been in the budget, such as evaluations, work with providers, child and family, South Bay, and the cost was \$86,000..This has been increased to \$98,000, since it is most likely that there will be a tuition increase, since these costs were not in the budget. Adding that all up is the minimum just to open the school doors next year and to keep staff and pay contractual obligations, in the amount of \$1,357,240.

The Level Services recommended budget (for instructional resources for teaching and learning) was then reviewed in sections, such as: the school it is needed at, the category, the cost and the rationale for the need, this totals \$121,949. An instructional hardware program is being put together, since there is not one in the district. There was a plan to implement software, but not hardware. It will be linked in with the hardware at the elementary level. Much of the Professional Development money will be used to cover software and other obligations such as licenses, etc. The technology hardware amount (\$50,000) is a placeholder. The Region will be purchasing Chrome Books, which will pilot PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College & Careers), which is a new program that the State is requiring that the Region do. Four (4) carts are being purchased for that. The \$900,000 will go towards it. Thus there are two (2) long range plans that are not part of this budget.

The Capital Plan for facilities and maintenance is a multi-year plan, since there are a lot of costs in it. This is being worked on between Mr. Baker and Bob Souza. It includes structural costs and costs that would impact safety. Then work is being done on the ongoing Technology Plan. There are diverse opinions on how and where people want to start, and that needs to be determined first and what it means with respect to professional development and training. There is a placeholder there in the amount of \$50,000. Also, there is a need to put money back into the buildings; \$3,500 in each building, since the same thing is happening here. Also, the Legal Expense account has been woefully underfunded at \$26,000, leaving nothing for Special Education, nothing to dispute trying to retain students in the District. Thus, this line item has been increased to \$75,000. There have been some extraordinary costs at the High School this year. The total increase for these items is \$1,763,039. \$1.1 is the E&D (Excess and Deficiency) account. Many things are being done regarding changing staff to deliver better services and also to help with Special Education and insurance. Not a lot of changes can be made all at once. It depends on the budget, assumptions and reorganizing when the budget is comfortable.

There are no new personnel in this budget. New positions will come about as reorganization takes place, but new staff is not being added. Staff is actually being cut back. There are also areas that can be potentially looked at for cutting back in regular education. Selectman Belliveau stated that last year the Town provided one time monies to the schools, and that was not to be included as a budget item. Is it in here? Mr. Baker responded that the budget was not built that

way. It was built according to need. The budget was not addressed from that perspective. It was built on what is needed to run the School Department. Where items were not needed, those categories were not funded. Selectmen Belliveau stated that there is another \$250,000 over inflated, since it was slated for capital improvements.

Dr. Nash explained that they looked at enrollment with the school principals to see what would happen if staff reductions were made, and after retirements took place and other shifts. It is difficult to do a zero based budget. Another thing that became apparent was the fact that budget lines were not accurately portrayed. Some lines were underfunded, while some were over funded. Work is being done to determine the costs for FY13, what was spent and what it was projected to be, along with the rationale for why there was either an increase or decrease. The incoming Superintendent should be provided a budget with real numbers. Therefore, this is a level services budget, which means no new staff. It is not a level funded budget and not a reduction budget. There is not a lot of wiggle room with maintenance and technology areas. A little could be taken out of PD (Professional Development), however, it is cautioned to stay away from classrooms. The Region is not top heavy in administration. Not having assistant principals does create some challenges, but everyone is working around it. There are some key areas where administration should be added, and one is a nurse leader which is a stipend position, and also changes with moving the Athletic Director over. Selectman Powderly asked if the 2% increase was the last negotiated amount with the teachers. Dr. Nash responded in the affirmative. Selectman Powderly asked if Freetown pays their proper allocated percentage. Mr. Baker responded that everything that was billed for last year has been received.

Discussion then took place on what Freetown pays vs. Lakeville. Dr. Nash went over the numbers and enrollment projections. It is being projected that AES will go from 347 to 324 students based on the projection for kindergarten. This is using real numbers moving forward for enrollments. The October 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment report is most accurate. The Region has estimated numbers based on the Governor's budget. Some immediate Boston suburbs enrollments are going up, but generally the State enrollment is going down. Dr. Nash explained that also hiring has been done to solve a particular problem rather than to solve it at an earlier level. This year the Region did hire two (2) classroom teachers and support staff for Special Education grade four. A High School program though was eliminated. Class sizes are 24-25 students. FES numbers are also down, so a teacher can move over. There is a need to create a different program for GRAIS due to the cohort. The issue you always have is with K-5 grades. You can take students and divide them into classrooms, however, you cannot do this at the Middle and High School levels since it is program driven. If you want the schools to be competitive, then the numbers are not all even. At this time the Region's Program of Studies is not competitive for the students. This area needs to be revisited and changes made. The Region needs to look at the programs it is going to offer. Selectman Powderly asked Mr. Baker to email the numbers of students in each grade to him.

The Program of Studies needs to adequately reflect what courses the students will need for college and/or to be career ready. The rigor needs to be increased, which really is the contract for the teachers, which needs to be addressed. It does not mean you need new staff. And you cannot add positions, which are not classroom positions, which are not able to be sustained such as Reading Specialists and Literacy Coaches. The Middle School should have art, music, etc., and that has not been addressed and is being done by trading off staff. There are areas that can be

looked at to make reductions in, not including the classrooms. Freetown has a lot of space. In the future, there needs to be a lot of serious discussion of the structure of the elementary schools.

Dr. Nash mentioned that they are looking into outsourcing sped transportation. There have been 12 inquiries. Also discussion has taken place with the bus company regarding the reduction of a bus, which is \$75,000, however, it will increase run time at the elementary school level. Those are some potential areas that are being looked at. Mr. Powderly reminded her that there is only a 2.5% that the Town can do due to the taxes and the taxpayer. Dr. Nash responded that she is being cognizant of sustainability.

The Additional Needs budget handout was next reviewed and discussed. The second page is the FY15 Additional Needs Budget for Personnel and Programs Priority List. Dr. Nash went over all this and stated that some of this she feels can be reorganized, if it is not all approved. Mr. Powderly stated that he could not support this budget without the School Committee looking at staffing and other problems. If they are willing to do that, I think they could come up with the funds. I would be happy to support this, but no one wants to look at the under-utilization without looking at class structure. Dr. Nash stated that one way to address this is in the contract language which is strict with planning time, common planning time and hours in the day, and this contract says per day, not per week. Paras do lunch and recess, so when we eliminated them, the schools had no coverage. We had to go back and start hiring those positions back. Since there has not been continuity in Superintendents, the Region has not been able to address things in the contracts.

Dr. Nash stated that she will report the conversations to the School Committee that took place with both groups, last Wednesday night with Freetown, and today with Lakeville. It is not known what the suggestions will be from the School Committee.

### **New Business**

Selectman Belliveau asked if the Region was aware of a \$3 million fund for transportation that they could tap into. There is a pool of money the State has for out-of-district voke-ed transportation that schools can apply for. Ms. Garbitt state that it would have been very beneficial for the Town if the School District had applied for the funds when Lakeville had a student attending Norfolk County Agricultural School. The transportation cost was \$27,000 per year. The Town could have been reimbursed that amount for three (3) years. Right now the Town pays \$10,000 annually for the transportation for the Bristol Aggie student. This would also benefit Freetown. Dr. Nash will look into this.

Selectman Belliveau stated that the budget shows a 6.88% increase which is not sustainable by the Town. The Town had an override last year and that would mean another one this year. Selectman Burke stated that a level services recommended budget is not realistic. The first sheet, with the 2.5% is more realistic. The Town's expectation is that all Town Departments will stay within that framework, since we don't have the resources to otherwise increase. Selectman Powderly stated that it can be done. Dr. Nash stated that she has not been provided a directive from the School Committee. Selectman Belliveau stated that Lakeville has also not met with Freetown to see where they stand with the School budget. Dr. Nash stated that they can certainly go back and make reductions. There are ways to deliver services and make reductions. The most important job of the School Committee is the budget, and it is not your responsibility to

understand it all, unless you get all the information. The School Committee needs that and to be educated, and it does not appear that that has happened, so they don't know what questions to ask. That is due to changing leadership and different styles. They need to make informed decisions with the information they have been provided.

**Adjournment**

Upon a motion made by Selectman Powderly and seconded by Selectman Burke, it was

VOTED:       To adjourn the Selectmen's Meeting at 12:06 PM.  
                  Unanimous in favor