

TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION

March 3, 2009

A work session of the Jamestown Town Council was called to order at the Jamestown Town Hall in the Rosamond A. Tefft Council Chambers at 93 Narragansett Avenue at 6:32 p.m. by Council President Julio J. DiGiando. The following members were present:

William A. Kelly
Barbara A. Szepatowski
Robert W. Sutton, Jr.
Michael White, Vice-President

Also present:

Bruce R. Keiser, Town Administrator
Heather R. Lopes, Deputy Town Clerk Pro Tem
Dr. Marcia Lukon, School Superintendent
Cathy Kaiser, School Committee Chair
Julie Kallfelz, School Committee Vice-Chair
Julia Held, School Committee Member
B.J. Whitehouse, School Committee Member
William Brennan, School Committee Member

Cathy Kaiser began the meeting with the introduction of a special guest, Mr. Xu Yonghui of China. Ms. Kaiser stated Mr. Yonghui is here as part of an exchange program for Principals and Superintendents around the world.

Ms. Kaiser stated the School Committee asked the School Administration to build a budget from a zero base. The proposed budget has an increase of 2.42 percent with an anticipated Town contribution of 2.26 percent which is two (2) full percentage points below the cap. The proposed budget also assumes level funding of state aid. It is possible this year that funding from the State of Rhode Island will be below the amount that would equal level funding.

Dr. Marcia Lukon gave a power point presentation beginning with the mission of Jamestown School District to “partner with the community to provide a safe, nurturing learning environment in which each child is challenged to fulfill his/her unique potential” and the budget goal of “maintaining the present level of programming and provide needed services for our known student population in the most effective manner”.

Dr. Lukon stated the FY2010 Operating Budget adopted by the School Committee totals \$11,919,033. This amount is an increase from the FY2009 budget in the amount of \$281,783. Major budgeting factors include:

- Contractual obligations, Salaries, and Benefits
- State and Federal mandates and Regulations (including Special Education/Needs and No Child Left Behind (NCLB))

- Plant operations
- District's mission
- Strategic Plan Goals
- School Committee Goals
- School Improvement Plan Goals for each school

Dr. Lukon stated the proposed enrollment for the:

- Melrose Avenue School is down to 270, from 278 in the current year.
- The Lawn Avenue School also is proposed to have a reduction by 1 student to a total of 195 students.
- The enrollment in the Melrose Avenue and Lawn Avenue Schools show a proposed decrease of nine (9) students.
- Military student enrollment currently stands at 53 for the Elementary Schools
- It is projected the enrollment of Jamestown students attending North Kingstown High School will remain the same at 224.
- Military student enrollment currently stands at 13 for North Kingstown High School

Dr. Lukon also noted there is:

- One (1) student attending Narragansett High School
- Eleven (11) Out-of-District Special Needs students
- Four (4) students attending area Charter Schools. Per RI State Law, the Town of Jamestown is required to budget for six (6) students to attend a Charter School.

Dr. Lukon stated the Department of Student Services FY2010 Budget totals \$ 2,224,749. This amount is an increase from the FY2009 budget in the amount of \$86,933. The key budget factors were:

- Federal and Rhode Island regulations governing education of children with disabilities
- Individual Education Plan (IEP) requirements
- Salaries and benefits for special needs teachers and staff
- Out-of-District tuitions
- Findings and Directives issued in the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) school support system final report

Dr. Lukon stated the Capital Reserve Projects FY2010 Budget totals \$ 274,197.00. The Capital Reserve Projects breakdown is:

- Melrose Avenue School \$137,000
- Lawn Avenue School \$62,600
- Technology Projects \$74,597

Dr. Lukon stated the major unknowns for the school budget are:

- Level funding for State and Federal Aid and Grants
- Number of Retirees
- Savings from State of Rhode Island Out-of-District Transportation Project
- Final impact of the Governor's Budget Proposals

- Future cost of fuel/energy
- Military enrollment

Dr. Lukon shared this year's NECAP Scores for information. Dr. Lukon believes these scores show Jamestown School Department is doing a great job improving every year in the scores for writing, reading and mathematics. Yearly improvement is required per the regulations of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The Town of Jamestown is credited in part, for the proficient scores and achievements of resident students in that the Town has historically been a great supporter of the School Department.

Discussions ensued between the Council and School Committee regarding class size for Jamestown Schools and the standard throughout the State. Committee Member, Julia Held stated accommodation for the addition of military students throughout the year must be considered. Dr. Lukon stated the contractual limits with the teachers as to the number of students in certain classrooms must also be considered.

Councilor Kelly questioned why the budget has increased but the enrollment numbers are down. Councilor Kelly stated Jamestown is third in the State for the highest cost per student. Councilor Kelly noted the Town is trying to reduce their budget and feels the School Department should be doing the same.

Discussion ensued regarding the freezing wages of employees not covered by labor unions and some concessions in upcoming contract negotiations for the 3 contracts that end July 1, 2010 by the Town for their budget and it was stated maybe the School Committee could look at similar options.

Councilor Szepatowski asked if a list had been drafted of proposed items to cut in the event that less money is received from the State than expected and if that list could be shared. Ms. Kaiser stated items have been discussed but a list had not been given to the School Committee and would not yet be released to the public. Ms. Kaiser also stated that the Town Council had not requested a zero increase budget from the School Committee. A 2.42% increase is possibly the lowest increase ever requested and Ms. Kaiser is unsure if the budget can be reduced to a 0% increase with so many unknowns.

Council President DiGiando asked to be provided with figures regarding some special needs programs and the number of retirees receiving health and dental benefits.

Discussion ensued regarding Charter Schools. Also discussed was the cost of transportation. Per student figures were not available tonight and are subject to change pending the State project. Ms. Kaiser requested direction from the Town Council as to what is expected from the School Committee for budget numbers. Mr. Keiser, Town Administrator, confirmed that an official communication will be sent to the School Committee. It was the consensus of all parties that the education of our students is important.

It was agreed and scheduled to hold the next school budget work session on March 31, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Council Chambers. It was also noted the date for the town

budget work session is set for March 30, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Council Chambers.

The work session adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Attest:

Heather R. Lopes
Deputy Town Clerk Pro Tem

c: Town Council Members (5)
Town Administrator
Town Solicitor
Administrative Circulation