

## Finance Committee Meeting Minutes March 4, 2008

**Present:** Al DeVito - chair, Richard Knabel, Sharon Estrella, Ann Nelson and Brian Athearn.

**Guests:** Bruce Stone, Town Accountant; Skipper Manter & Glenn Hearn, Selectmen; Peg Regan & Steve Nixon, MVRHS; Dr. James Weiss, Superintendent of Schools; Amy Tierney, School Treasurer; Diane Gandy, Principal Chilmark School; Laurie Halt & Dan Seklecki, MV Schools; Bob Lane, Asst. Principal WT School; Susan Parker, Marshall Segall, Roxanne Ackerman, Skipper Manter & Dan Cabot, UIRSD School Committee.

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m.

### **MVRHS Budget #313:**

Peg began by explaining that the statutory method was being used since all six towns are needed for the regional plan, and one town will not approve this plan. Deciding now to use the statutory method will avoid the need and expense for extra town meetings as was experienced last year.

Administration costs at the Superintendent's office have risen 3.85%. The HS pays a flat 20% of the Supt. office costs.

The HS has collected app. \$2mil. in grants. No grant money is used to pay salaries (ie the grants coordinator).

Line #35 Legal Services in the amount of \$35,000 includes land use issues and personnel matters.

Line #49 Autism Salary was once paid in part by a grant and is no longer.

Line #72 Principal's R&D covers summer curriculum writing, updating old and new courses.

Line #85 Salary Increments Non-Contract is for raises for non-union workers such as principal, assistant, athletic director, guidance, etc. Teachers and union workers get a negotiated increase. Non-union employees negotiate their own raises with the superintendent. This varies year to year and these contracts are staggered.

The student/teacher ratio at the HS is app. 21/1. Language, AP and resource are smaller classes. The majority of SPED classes are for resource room. The resource room provides accommodations in mainstream areas. This is not a tutorial service, but rather, a means for students to learn strategies for organizing to get their work done and to provide time to complete tests. 80% of SPED students are classified as mild with the remaining 20% as severe. Peg noted that the school system is looking at where and when students are being referred; why there are so many on the Vineyard; what grade level, age, reason for referral.

Line #124 Star Program Salary. The STAR program is a behavioral program that this year was for freshmen only and is aimed at identifying at-risk students as they enter the HS. 1/5 of the salaries of five teachers - math, science, English, social studies, administration - is being allocated for this program. The students have two core classes a day with a case review meeting of the teachers each day. Next year this will be increased to 2/5 and will serve freshmen and sophomores. These students are identified by their at-

tendance record, grades, teacher/parent referrals and behavior. This year, academic success has been phenomenal, but more work is needed on behavior.

#132 After School Programs is no longer offered. There are not enough hours to satisfy state requirements.

#134 Substitutes Salary covers teachers' absences averaging 9 per year per teacher primarily for off-island coursework and conferences.

\$142 Home Tutoring fluctuates from year to year depending on the number of students sick, suspended, expelled, etc.

#149 Salary, Other Contracted Stipend covers the money paid teacher who coach extra-curricular activities such as clubs, the school newspaper, etc. This stipend comes under Appendix A of the teacher's contract.

#153 Undistributed Textbooks is for the purchase of new textbooks. This expense is rotated from through the departments from year to year.

#154 Undistributed Supplies covers all materials that actually go into students' hands - pencils, paper, etc.

\$163 ELL Translations. All hand-out materials must be translated into Portuguese.

#183 Salary, Regular Day Bus Drivers. Last year this line was app. \$1mil. This year, it has been broken out into various lines to reflect the actual need for transport - boat, fast ferry, air, SPED - to provide accurate figures to supply to the state for reimbursement.

Sharon raised a concern that there were times when students were being left without bus pickup. Peg is aware of the situation and requested specific instances including date, time, location, # of students. With this information, she will go to Jimmy Flynn to rectify the problem.

#188 Elementary Transportation Reimbursement is going down. The HS is asking less of the elementary schools since the elem. schools can't get state reimbursement and the HS can.

#198 An increase of \$28,000 for athletic coaches was negotiated last year. Our coaches had been paid at half the rate of Cape Cod coaches.

#202 - 215 are expenses for operating and maintaining the Superintendent's building, owned by the HS.

#235 - 247 are for shared services and have been pulled out of the regional budget.

#266 Regional Transportation Reimbursements are very low due to lower costs last year. This is expected to be higher next year.

In response to Richard's question as to an 8% increase Peg responded it was due to health insurance, buses and lower revenue.

There was a discussion about the warrant article being placed on town warrants for money to pay for an arts position that has been cut back. Peg explained that the school could not accept money not in the budget. If approved, the money would have to be treated as a grant. All grants must go before the school committee for approval.

Richard moved, with a second by Brian for preliminary approval of the MVRHS Budget #313. The motion passed 5-0.

Peg thanked the members for West Tisbury's support during her 9-year tenure. She, in turn, was thanked for her excellent work as principal.

### **UIRSD Budget:**

Al asked for confirmation that bus transportation is based on a formula, not distance, which was affirmed by Dr. Weiss. \$158,000 from E&D will be used to offset the purchase of 6 new buses. The E&D figure is 5% of the budget and does not have expenditure constraints.

Al noted the entire budget was up by 4.44%. The West Tisbury portion is up 6.4% while the Chilmark portion has decreased by 2.91% due to a reduction in staff. The number of students for FY09 should be about the same.

Al expressed his dismay that with 5 pages of 425 line items it was impossible to get any tangible information. He wanted to be able to discern things such as how many teachers there are; the cost per pupil; etc. By dividing the total by the enrollment number it appears that it costs \$25,369 to educate one pupil - a cost higher than attending the Falmouth Academy.

Dan Cabot commented that the school committee had talked about breaking down the budget in other ways. Susan Parked added the school committee had tried hard to address the issues raised by the FinCom during last year's review.

Dr. Weiss explained that there is a significant increase in the Superintendent's Office for an expanded Headway Program. Also, that salaries and insurance were up, while transportation income was down. He said the intent of the summary sheet was to clarify the budget.

Bruce Stone suggested that they try to think in terms of a two-district budget: one for K-5 in two schools and one for 6-8 in one school. Figure the allocation for each and break-out the comparable costs.

Richard moved, with a second by Ann for preliminary approval of the UIRSD Budget #311. The motion passed 3-1-1.

### **Warrant Article #18 Wastewater Pump Station:**

Dr. Weiss explained that the HS was supposed to upgrade its wastewater system during the '90s, but had not done so. This needs to be done. The town of Oak Bluffs has agreed to let the HS hook up to their system for treatment, as they have the capacity, if the treated waste can then be sent back to the HS leaching field. There is a possibility that the YMCA will be included. Dr. Weiss is asking the towns for bonding authority for \$1.5 mil. The money would not be granted in FY09, but rather in FY10.

Brian moved, with a second by Richard to approve the warrant article. The motion passed 3-2.

### **Public Forum:**

Sharon felt the upcoming Forum had become more formalized than she had thought it would be. Al explained the committee needed to be prepared with an introduction to outline the present perspective. Ann noted the need for a moderator to answer questions.

There being no other business, a motion for adjournment was made and seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:25pm.

The next meeting is Tuesday, March 11 at 4:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Rogers, Administrative Clerk