

**TOWN OF SEEKONK**  
**QUAD-BOARD MEETING**  
**JANUARY 17, 2018**

A Quad-Board meeting was held at Seekonk High School on Wednesday, January 17, 2018.

Board of Selectmen Chairman David Andrade opened the meeting at 7 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Other boards also opened the meeting.

Chairman Andrade advised that anyone in attendance who wanted to record the meeting must notify the Chairman. The meeting is recorded via audio and visual.

The intent of the meeting is to focus on the FY'19 budget – planning for the future.

Town Administrator Shawn E. Cadime and Finance Director Bruce Alexander were in attendance.

Board members introduced themselves.

Capital Improvement Committee: Keith Tavares, Chairman; Noah Escaler, Vice-Chairman; Susan Rutter, Secretary; Steve Rutter, George Piquette, Chris Zorro.

Finance Committee: Russ Horsman, Chairman; Matt Salisbury, Vice Chairman; Jack Horton, Clerk; Ann Hartnett, Justin Sullivan.

Board of Selectmen: David Andrade, Chairman; Nelson Almeida, Vice Chairman; David Viera, Clerk; Michelle Hines, David Parker.

School Committee: Supt. Arlene Bosco, School Finance Administrator Barbara Hamel, and members – John Dietel, Chairman; Erin Brouillette, Beth Elklund, Deborah Viveiros.

Chairman Dietel had a slide presentation on School Department transportation. At one time, the School Department had its own buses and drivers were paid by the town, including health insurance and retirement. It was cheaper for the School Department but more expensive for the town. The School Department asked for more funding over the past several years to bridge this gap. The town has already saved that money and that is part of the reason the town has surplus. The School Department does not participate in that increased revenue.

Supt. Bosco said Seekonk is at 133 net school spending compared to other areas. Per pupil cost is in the middle.

Mr. Cadime said every time they prepare a budget they want to partner with the School

Department and that is the main focus going forward. It is important that people understand how revenue gets dispersed. Part of the revenue is Chapter 70 (educational monies) that goes directly to the schools. Local aid goes to the town side.

From the pool of money left, there are related fixed costs (health insurance costs and retirement costs). Then, there is a total revenue line divided 65% schools and 35% town.

The Board of Selectmen has the ability to do Proposition 2 ½ override but that's not needed.

Mr. Cadime said new growth is not certified by Assessors until September or October. The average new growth for the last twelve years is \$565,283. They budgeted \$400,000. The School Department loses out on \$107,433 on average over the years; the town \$57,849.

Enrollment numbers in the School Department have decreased by 6.8%. The School Department has seen a \$4.9M increase in its budget – 24%. That does not include carryover money or pre-SPED tuition enrollment, books, grants, or circuit breaker money. FY'18 circuit breaker is \$838,970 based on FY'17. Free cash is appropriated into stabilization accounts.

Schools have received \$600,000 per year. From 2013 to 2018, the School Department received an additional \$3M between free cash or municipal stabilization account.

The Governor will submit the budget to the legislature by January 24.

There is a ballot question asking voters if they want to decrease sales tax to 5%.

Chairman Dietel asked about free cash figures for all the other departments.

Chairman Andrade said it seems like an attack. The intent is not to finger point. The intent of the summary is to show the money coming in and the way funds are dispersed. It is not meant in a derogatory manner when talking about the School Department.

Mr. Cadime said Chapter 70 funds go directly to the schools. It bothers him when he hears that the town is not providing enough funding to the School Department. Free cash is divided with the School Department. Looking at enrollment reduction of 6.8% and we continue to give at least \$1M annually to the School Department. Services are being reduced and we still continue to do 65%/35% split. There was never any talks about grants and circuit breaker. Circuit breaker is an additional \$838,000.

Supt. Bosco noted that a certain amount of money has to be spent to qualify for circuit breaker. For example, \$65,000 to qualify for one student. That funding will be cut again for next year.

Mr. Cadime said he supports education but feels they need to be a little more progressive with how to identify new revenues coming in.

Chairman Andrade asked what the School Department spent in order to get the \$838,000.

Mrs. Hamel did not know.

A School Committee member said closer to \$3M. The reimbursement is 40% of an amount over \$60,000.

With regard to the School Department not participating in things that drive the revenue increase, the number of homes, prices and how quickly they are sold are attributable to the Seekonk School Department.

Chairman Dietel suggested if there is no acknowledgement that the School Department is responsible for transportation, it should go back to the way it was. He said enrollment is going up.

Chairman Andrade said everyone knows Seekonk is a great school system. Part of the enrollment increase is full day kindergarten.

Chairman Dietel said with more money the schools could do even better.

With respect to circuit breaker, Mr. Cadime explained there were 33 students at \$2.7M. The eligible cost was \$1,290,291 and 65% would get the reimbursement of \$838,690.

Net school spending for FY'17 is showing 44% over and above net school spending or 144%.

Supt. Bosco stated that the need for more space started three years ago. There is a 2.74% increase in students right now. They surveyed residents – 88.9% wanted to keep grade configuration the way it is and 9% wanted it K-8. The School Committee brought in a Mr. Smalley to do an evaluation. As long as it is a school facility it does not have to be up to code. Any new renovations would require ADA compliance. There would be a significant cost. Another option would be portable classrooms. Total cost for two units would be \$437,000.

Ms. Hines noted the School Committee has seen this presentation. The intent of this meeting is for budget purposes.

Chairman Andrade said part of the discussion is to plan for the FY 2019 budget.

Chairman Dietel suggested moving the fifth grade to Hurley School. Not sure where administration would go.

Chairman Andrade asked how much space needed.

Chairman Dietel said over the next 7 to 10 years will need 8,000 sq. ft.

Mr. Viera felt it would be cheaper to take down the Pleasant Street School and build another.

Chairman Dietel agreed. He added the North School as well.

Mr. Escaler noted that currently there are students in the Pleasant Street School.

Chairman Andrade couldn't figure out why they are trying to renovate a big building when they only need 8,000 sq. ft.

Chairman Dietel said nobody is proposing to renovate that building.

Chairman Andrade suggested putting administration at the North School and freeing space at the middle school.

Chairman Dietel said that would not satisfy the need.

Ms. Brouillette suggested two pods for next year and keeping the long range plan in mind.

Ms. Eklund not in favor of that.

Mr. Parker stated that everybody knows there is a crunch in the school system. However, they need to talk about a budget to present at town meeting.

Chairman Dietel felt they could come up with a decision by town meeting.

CIC Chairman Tavares asked about the agreement with the Southcoast Collaborative.

Supt. Bosco said it is on the table. They need to address the needs of parents.

Chairman Tavares listed the items presented by other departments. The CIC is not recommending the replacement of tennis and basketball courts at \$380,000 (too high).

The total recommendations equal \$980,000 for FY'19. It might be a little less because they will try to lease some of the items

Finance Chairman Horsman said the Finance Committee wants to present actual detailed recommendation to the town.

Mr. Almeida felt the School Department should maintain the same percentage of salary increases (1 to 3%) as all other employees.

Chairman Dietel felt that comment was inappropriate.

Ms. Eklund asked that the Collins Center report be put on the website.

Mr. Viera felt Quad-Board meetings should be held more often.

Mr. Zorro asked if the School Committee could function the way it is for one more meeting.

Chairman Dietel said they could but do not want to.

A motion was made by Ms. Hines, seconded by Mr. Parker, and it was unanimously

**VOTED:** To adjourn at 8:36 p.m.

The vote: Ms. Hines – Aye; Mr. Parker – Aye; Mr. Almeida – Aye; Mr. Viera - Aye; Chairman Andrade - Aye.

Other boards adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Gamer, Secretary