

***Newton South School Council Meeting
March 15, 2011***

Present: Ryan Augusta, Bob Parlin, Joel Stembridge, Deena David, Barry Wanger, Lisa Rucinski, Debbie Linder, Ariel Kaluzhny, Eleanor Wood, Eleanor Richard, Marci Sapers, Jeanne O'Reilly, Chip DiMarco, Mona Hochberg, Marcia Okun, Janet Wertheimer, Tom Lee, Charlie Myette.

Joel Stembridge called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 15.

Traffic Safety and Parking

It was reported that the Council's recommendation to reduce the parking fees to \$180 is being looked upon favorably by the school committee. In addition, Barry Wanger reported that there has been agreement to have a traffic safety study done of the entire parking/road areas.

People agreed that there has been a huge improvement since the parking on Brandeis Road leading to the parking lots has been disallowed. Barry will contact Alderman Charlie Shapiro of the Traffic and Safety Committee to determine what steps we need to take to make the no parking area permanent.

Budget Update

Joel Stembridge then gave a thorough update on the current status of the budget. It is not good news and has some very distressing implications. The following are the highlights:

Last year, there were cuts made in the staffing at Newton South:

Library staffing was reduced.

Secretarial staffing was reduced.

Two assistant principal positions were combined into one vice principal position.

0.4 FTE was transferred from South to North.

Current budget outlook for the Newton schools:

\$4.4 million dollar budget gap to be addressed with:

\$3.4 million in reductions

\$1.0 million in increased fees.

Increased fees discussion:

Athletic fees will increase.

An activity fee (one fee per student regardless of the number of clubs) of \$125.

Drama production fees of \$150 per performance up to a maximum of \$450 for the academic year.

Expense reduction discussion:

Newton North has seen an increase in enrollment of +50 over expected; South has only seen an increase of +9 over expected. Therefore, according to the formula that is used (that compares enrollment by curriculum level etc), North will lose 2.9 FTE's and South will lose 6.9 FTE's. Joel explained that he accepts this as correct since he had Steven Rattendi, Josepha Blocker and Mary Scott advocating for South. He did show that for curriculum level one sections, the average class size at South this year is 21.8, while being 23.3 at North. The difference in the reduction levels will bring the two schools to parity.

In addition, there will be additional cuts in the special education arena. Again, due to more efficient organizations at North, there will be more severe cuts at South (7 positions) than at North (one position). Here are some of the differences at the schools that highlight the need for differential in reductions:

Average size classes for Academic Support are 3.7 at South and 6.0 at North. There is only one umbrella program at North for special education, whereas South has four.

About half of the students in the Connections program at South have 1-1 aides; none of the 40 students at North have 1-1 aides.

The school committee vote is scheduled for April 6th; in the meantime, there are various public meetings for discussion on the budget. Deena David passed out a timeline showing the various meetings.

There was a good amount of discussion about the effect of the 'activity fees.' Joel raised a lot of possible logistical problems with them as did many members of the Council. There were also questions raised about other ways to fund school budgets such as naming rights to buildings, fundraising efforts and the like.

Discussion then turned to what the Council could do to advocate for NSHS. Joel stressed that people keep their comments directed what the budget means to NSHS and not to pit schools against each other. Barry will look into contacting North's council and maybe draft an impact statement to send to the appropriate groups.

The next meeting is April 12th at 4:30—social time starting at 4:15 in the faculty dining room.

Submitted by Tom Lee