

TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION

March 31, 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 6:30 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
Christina D. Collins, Finance Director
Dr. Marcia Lukon, School Superintendent
Jane Littlefield, Business Manager
Cathy Kaiser, School Committee Chair
B.J. Whitehouse, School Committee Member
Julie Kallfelz, School Committee Member
William Brennan, School Committee Member
Julia Held, School Committee Member

The work session began with Dr. Lukon giving an overview of the areas of the school budget that were reduced due to lower premiums. These areas include: health care premiums reduced by \$143,234 due to joining the Group Health Benefits of Rhode Island; worker compensation premiums were reduced by \$6,766; and property insurance was lowered by \$1,654. These savings total \$151,654. Dr. Lukon stated there are no other reductions in the budget at this time. Dr. Lukon mentioned there may be a possibility of more students attending a private school as opposed to North Kingstown High School, this would reduce the cost of tuition paid to the Town of North Kingstown.

Discussion ensued regarding \$106,000 for special education that may be lost due to the Government reducing state aid for schools. If this money is lost, it will cause a shortfall in the school budget. There will be a need to make up for the shortfall, possibly with federal stimulus money. There are several restrictions and requirements as to how stimulus money can be spent. One such restriction limits funds to specific special education needs.

Mr. Keiser stated a reduction in the school budget in the amount of \$150,000 is necessary to achieve a 0% tax increase. This reduction has been met by savings on the premiums for insurances. The possible loss of \$106,000, initiates the need visit other areas in the budget that cause a reduction. With the total of savings on the school budget, the balance remaining as a proposed shortfall would be \$104,346.

Councilor Szepatowski addressed the question of funding for the Student Assistance Counselor. She stated she fully supports this position and has received positive feedback information on the influence to our local children. Councilor Szepatowski would like to see this position made permanent and year round. Discussion ensued regarding funding of the position. A portion of the funding had come from grants for the Teen Center that are no longer going to be received as of this year as well as assistance from the Substance Abuse Task Force. The School Department funds \$30,000 towards this position for the service provided in the schools during the school year. Dr. Lukon stated this amount is not enough to fund a full three (3) days of service. The discussion turned to the question of who this individual reports to and it was found they are neither a School nor a Town employee. This is considered a contractual position. It was agreed clarification needs to be made as to where funding should come from and who this position should report to. It was corrected that this position reports to Kathy Almanzor but strictly for work done at the school during the school day. Mr. Keiser stated a request for Town funds for this position has not been received. Christina Collins stated she and Jane Littlefield will collaborate to attempt to find other avenues of possible funding options.

Cathy Kaiser stated a vote by the School Committee on the Proposed School Budget will be held on April 23, 2009. A final copy will be forwarded to the Town Council in a timely manner for their final Budget work session being held on April 27, 2009.

The work session adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Attest:

Heather R. Lopes
Deputy Town Clerk Pro Tem

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