

Preliminary FY09 School Committee Budget

During the month of January, the School Committee conducted a detailed review of the Superintendent's proposed budget for the next school year, FY09, and on January 24 the Committee approved a preliminary budget of \$32,270,060. This represents a 3.7% increase over the current year's budget. This represents the second year in a row that the Committee has brought forth an austere budget.

You might recall that the current year's school department budget (FY08) represents a decrease in service level from the prior year's budget (FY07), as staffing was reduced by 17 people and fees were increased. The preliminary FY09 budget holds the line on further service decreases but does not restore what was lost. As with previous budgets, the increase in costs can be primarily attributed to normal increases in wages, transportation costs, and maintenance.

The School Committee feels that it is vital that the town support a level service budget by whatever means necessary while we continue to work to bring the town's financial situation back into balance. We believe that the community must maintain a strong and vibrant school system.

The amount of the FY09 school budget increase is approximately \$700,000 lower than had been estimated in October in conjunction with the efforts of the Financial Plan Working Group (FPWG). The lower amount is due to 1) following a specific suggestion of the FPWG to make more efficient use of revolving accounts, and 2) implementing changes in service delivery models in both the technology and special education areas. Kudos goes to Dr. Phelan and his administrative team for out-of-the-box thinking in developing these new service delivery models.

Regarding technology, a re-organization of our technology department will allow the district to continue to offer assistance to teachers in building technology into their lessons, while allowing us to meet our increasing data reporting requirements. We will also be able to provide better technical support of our computers and networks.

Regarding special education, re-allocation of special education resources will allow us to offer a continuum of intervention in regular and special education. Existing special education programs will continue, but collaboration with regular education will be increased.

In addition to these initiatives, the School Committee and school administration continue to pursue the other ideas pertinent to the school department that were identified by the Financial Plan Working Group to help alleviate the structural deficit in town finances. One of the ideas that is actively being pursued is to work with other town officials to closely examine common school and government operations to see if they can be combined to create efficiencies and cost savings for the Town.

According to the Town Charter, the timeline to finalize the overall town budget is as follows. The School Committee is required to submit a preliminary budget to the Town Manager by February 1st. The Town Manager is required to submit an overall town budget to the Board of Selectman by March 1st. The Board of Selectmen will adopt the budget by March 15 and forward it to the Appropriation Committee. After the overall budget has been reviewed by the

Appropriation Committee in March, the School Committee will hold a public hearing and will vote on a final School Committee budget.

The School Committee encourages residents to provide feedback on the budget to any School Committee member during this process. Information on the budget is available on the [school district's website](http://Hopkinton.k12.ma.us) (Hopkinton.k12.ma.us) or at the Superintendent's Office. School Committee contact information is available on the district website.

Hopkinton School Committee:

[Rebecca Robak](#), Chair

[Nancy Burdick](#), Vice-Chair

[Lyn Branscomb](#)

[Dave Stoldt](#)

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