

Approved Minutes
Norwich Finance Committee (NFC)
8-21-07

The meeting was called to order by Karen Kayen at 8:10 AM
Members present: Karen Kayen, chair, Paul Tierney, Irv Thomae, Henry Scheier and Al Converse

Also present: Gerard Chapdelaine, Steve Soares

1. The minutes of 7-17-07 were approved, 4 for and Henry Scheier abstaining

2. VT Construction aid payout.

To be discussed at our next meeting. Irv will present a proposed schedule for the Dresden renovation and new construction. The Norwich School bond will be paid up in fiscal 2010.

3. Reports from Selectboard and Schoolboard meetings.

Number of students in the Cross school expected to be 301-303 down from previous expectation of 314. This not expected to changes the number of FTE's.

The new VT school funding law requires that if the budget increase in \$/student is more than X% of last year's state average then the school board must divide the proposed budget into a portion that satisfies the limitation on the increase in per-pupil costs, and one that covers the excess. The two budgets are to be voted on separately. This goes into effect beginning a year from now.

4. Discussion of Budget Guidelines for the Norwich Cross School

Paul Tierney presented an updated version of a graph which compares the growth in the real per-pupil costs (50% of the period) to the growth in real incomes for the Norwich taxpayers (0 % over the period) (See Town Report ,p. 1-10.). Various shortcomings of the data were discussed, e.g., the fact that incomes were per income tax payer rather than per property owner, and that the income sensitivity component of the school property tax was not included.

Based on a presentation by Paul Tierney the changes, shown in italics and underlined, were recommended unanimously by the NFC.

Norwich School Board 2008-09 Budget Guidelines

In an effort to maintain our effort to achieve excellence, financial sustainability and public accountability in the Norwich School District, the Norwich School Board adopts the following budget guidelines for the development of the 2008-09 budget

1. When preparing the budget, the administration should place an emphasis on

controlling per-pupil spending in order to avoid the Vermont excess spending penalty.

2. The administration will continue efforts to present creative staffing patterns that would result in fewer FTEs and use other innovative techniques to maintain and improve the quality of education. In addition, the administration should use the budget process to determine if existing programs are making the most effective use of resources.
3. The administration will provide clear and objective information to help taxpayers understand the relationship between the budget and the achievement of high quality education as defined by the District. To meet this goal, the Board seeks a budget document that provides a written explanation of:
 - The levels of proposed spending for 2008-09
 - The spending that is mandated contractually or legally versus that which is discretionary
 - The reasoning behind differences in the proposed spending levels for 2008-09 budget versus the 2007-08 budget
 - The ability of the 2008-09 budget to promote excellence in the Marion Cross School
 - Evidence of student achievement
 - Comparative information on the cost effectiveness of the Norwich education program.
4. The administration should provide an overview of the effects of the 2008-09 budget proposal on budgets through 2013-14.]

end of guidelines

Paul Tierney moved that the statement, “The total system budget, including all employment compensation, will not increase by more than 2.75 %” be added to the guidelines. This was defeated 3:1:1 (Tierney yes; Converse, abstaining) largely because the Vt excess spending constraint was regarded as adequate.

5. Strategic Planning

The NFC agreed to request that one of its members, Paul Tierney, be appointed to the Strategic Planning Commission. A letter from Geoffrey Vitt concerning the public safety facility was discussed, and it was agreed that the subject of capital expenses be on the agenda of our next meeting.

NEXT MEETING IS SEPT 18 AT 8 AM