

2006-2007 Budget Development Process Is Underway

continued from page 2

If the voters don't support the proposed budget

If the community doesn't support the budget proposal, the Board of Education must determine and approve an alternate funding proposal. By law, the soonest the Board can hold another referendum is eight days from the previous one. However, because the two towns of Region 15 also hold a referendum for their own town budgets, an additional referendum for the Board's operating budget may be held two or three weeks after the first referendum, depending on the availability of dates.

Each referendum adds approximately \$15,000 to the Region 15 Board of Education's operating expenses. To encourage voter participation and save on the cost of holding a referendum, regional boards of education and towns sometimes hold their referenda on the same day. For the last two years, Southbury has held its budget referendum on the same day as the Region 15 Board of Education referendum. Middlebury holds its town and school budget referenda on different days.

When a budget is approved, whether on the first or a subsequent referendum, the funding goes into effect on the first day in July the beginning of the fiscal year.

Information about our proposed budget will be available on the Region 15 district website at www.region15.org.

**Pomperaug
Regional School District 15
286 Whittemore Road
PO Box 395
Middlebury, CT 06762-0395**

NON PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO 12
SOUTHURY, CT

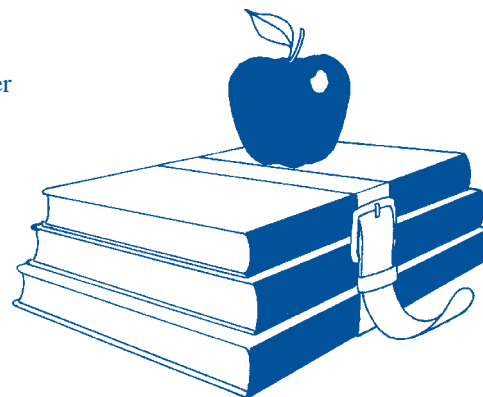
INFORMATION FOR REGION 15 RESIDENTS FROM THE BOARD OF EDUCATION • winter 2006

Pomperaug Regional School District 15

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Frank H. Sippy
Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Lois Lanning
Director of Finance and School Operations, Keith McLiverty
For further information please call (203) 758-8258.

Board of Education Members:

Mr. Joseph J. Drauss, Chairperson
Mr. Ioannis A. Kaloidis
Mr. John A. Kelly, Jr.
Mr. Stephen P. Moore, Secretary
Dr. Kenneth A. Paddyfote, Treasurer
Ms. Patricia S. Perry
Mr. Joseph Rock
Mr. Laurence E. Shapiro
Mr. Glen Shipway
Mr. Joseph J. Zukoski, III





MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

We begin the year by welcoming two new members to the Board of Education: **Joseph Rock** and **Glen Shipway**. They are beginning their terms in the midst of one of our busiest times as we prepare our 2006-2007 operating budget proposal, we look forward to their contribution.

As we begin the budget process, we want to renew our commitment to the residents of Middlebury and Southbury to listen to your suggestions and questions. We will begin public discussions on February 27 when the Superintendent of Schools presents his proposed operating budget to the Board. In March, the Board's Finance Committee will hold several public workshops on the Superintendent's proposal. Then on April 3, the Board will hold a public hearing for additional comments from residents.

In addition, this year we are trying something new to engage community members in the budget process. We held a series of focus groups with parents from each of our schools. Included in this newsletter is an article about the focus groups as well as articles explaining how the Superintendent develops his budget proposal and how the process leads to the May referendum. We hope you will take this opportunity to become informed and to participate in this year's budget process. More information about our 2006-2007 operating budget process can be found on our website at www.region15.org or by calling the Board office at (203) 758-8258.

In order to continually improve our academic program an evaluation/revision of our social studies curriculum is underway. We developed a cycle to evaluate and revise each of our subjects every six years to keep them current. This year we are reviewing social studies. At the end of the two-year development process, we expect to have a curriculum that will serve our teachers and students well. More about the curriculum revisions is included in the "Social Studies Curriculum" article on this page.

IN THIS ISSUE

Message From the Board of Education	1
Parents Share Insights into Budget Process	1 & 2
Social Studies Curriculum	1 & 3
2006-2007 Budget Development Process Is Underway	2 & 4
Operating Budget Balances Fiscal Responsibility with District Goals . . .	3

Parents Share Insights into Budget Process

Preparing a proposed operating budget is a multi-person effort beginning with the Superintendent of Schools in the fall and ending with the Board of Education in the spring. While we rely on the professional expertise of our administrators to help us craft a budget proposal that will support our educational goals, we also need to hear from citizens who invest their tax dollars in our school system.

continued on page 2

Social Studies Curriculum

Curriculum team members in Region 15 are discussing ways that social studies can help students at all grade levels build a progressive understanding of the various historical, political, geographical, economic and cultural topics they study each year. As curriculum is designed to move students toward a deeper understanding of history, there will be a greater focus on the underlying concepts and patterns that tie events together.

An evaluation and revision of our social studies curriculum is in its beginning stages. To ensure that curriculum remains up to date and meets

state standards, each subject area K-12 is reviewed every six years. With political, social and economic situations throughout the world continually changing, an updated social studies program is important. Students need to understand today's world and events that have shaped it in order to become active and responsible citizens.

Curriculum leaders are working to integrate social studies content around four main concepts or themes: economics, conflict and change, systems of government and interrelationships of cultures. Themes provide

the focus for students to learn about a social studies topic, whether it is the American Revolution, immigration or geography. Through thought-provoking activities, hands-on experiences, and a variety of resources, students will be able to see the relationships among events from different times. As they become more familiar with common issues and patterns, students will gain insights to world events they have not yet studied.

continued on page 3

Parents Share Insights into Budget Process continued from page 1

Over the next few months, we will hold several hearings and workshops to present our 2006-2007 operating budget proposal to the public. We hope that residents will take advantage of these opportunities to participate in the process by asking questions and sharing their ideas with us.

We made an effort to promote further conversation around budget development by hosting a series of focus groups, in addition to regular public hearings on the budget proposal. Approximately 25 people participated in each session. Keeping the groups to this size gave all participants a chance to share their thoughts.

The focus groups consisted of randomly selected parents from each of our schools. Our goal was to provide a forum in which parents, who all want the best education possible for their children, could discuss the operating budget process and their perceptions of our schools candidly. The discussions helped us learn what parents like about Region 15 schools; where there are misconceptions; and where parents want more support.

Themes that emerged from these focus group discussions are available by calling 758-8258. By hearing the thoughts and ideas of approximately 125 parents in five similarly structured meetings, we gained new insights that will be incorporated into our budget development process for next year.

2006-2007 Budget Development Process Is Underway

Knowledge of the budget process is essential to understanding a budget proposal. The beginning of the new year is the time when the Region 15 Board of Education begins the process of developing its operating budget proposal for the next school year. Developing a budget proposal that will support the educational goals of our schools is one of our main responsibilities, and we will spend many hours over the next few months refining it. We encourage you to participate in the upcoming budget workshops and hearings.

What we consider when developing a budget

The process of developing a proposal begins in the fall with projections of our operational expenses for the next year, including personnel requests and costs for instructional materials. Among the factors we consider are program improvements; diversification of course offerings; enrollment forecasts that may affect class sizes or programs; and unanticipated economic factors, such as rising fuel costs. Throughout the fall, the Superintendent of Schools and the administrators discuss the estimated expenditures and perform a cost benefit analysis to determine priorities. Their discussions add a lens of clarity that begins to define the proposed budget by December.

Timeline for budget development

During December, January and February, the Superintendent reviews all the budget information that comes out of discussions with administrators and prepares a proposal to bring to the Board of Education at a public meeting in February. The Board reviews the Superintendent's recommendations and goals for the budget and listens to public comment. After this meeting, the Board assumes responsibility for the proposed budget. In March, the Finance Subcommittee holds public workshops and may ask the Superintendent to consider a number of variables and scenarios before refining the budget further.

In April, the Board holds a public hearing on the proposed budget. This year's hearing will be **Monday, April 3**. The hearing provides an opportunity for the community to learn about the proposed budget, ask questions and make suggestions. The board then has one week to consider community feedback. **On Monday, April 10**, the Board will meet to approve the 2006-2007 operating budget proposal.

Because regional boards of education in Connecticut are agents of the State of Connecticut, towns have no direct governance authority over regional school districts. As a result, Boards depend on voter referenda to approve their proposed operating budgets. By law, regional school districts must hold their budget referendum on the first Tuesday or Wednesday in May. Historically, the citizens of Middlebury and Southbury have held their budget referendum on the first Wednesday in May. This year's referendum will be **May 3**.

When the voters approve the proposed budget

Each Region 15 member town is responsible for a portion of the budget approved by the voters based on the percentage of resident students it has attending district schools as of the previous October 1. For example, if on October 1, 2005, Middlebury's total number of students equaled 25 percent of Region 15's student population, the Town of Middlebury would be responsible for 25 percent of the approved budget. With 75 percent of the total student enrollment, Southbury would be responsible for 75 percent of the approved budget. Each town then includes its share of the Region 15 budget in the mil rate it establishes for the town budget.

Operating Budget Balances Fiscal Responsibility with District Goals

As the Superintendent of Schools for the Region 15 school district, Dr. Frank H. Sippy is responsible for managing the Board of Education's operating budget on a day-to-day basis. Each year, he is also responsible for proposing the most effective operating budget for the quality of education expected by the Board. On February 27, Dr. Sippy will share his proposed budget for 2006-2007 with the Board at a public meeting. We will then modify the proposed budget based on examination of his proposal and the public feedback we receive from the community. Our goal is to present the public with a proposed operating budget at the May 3 referendum that is both fiscally responsible and supportive of Region 15's academic goals. We recently asked Dr. Sippy about how he developed his 2006-2007 budget proposal.

What are some of the factors that you had to consider when developing your proposed budget?

Budget development was more challenging than usual this time because of the rise in energy costs. Just as the costs for heating oil, electricity, gasoline, and diesel fuel continue to affect every household's budget, they also affect our school district's budget. The utility costs in my proposed budget reflect market values, which will help guard against the possibility of budget shortfalls in energy costs next year. Having shortfalls could cause us to draw funds from instructional budgets to pay for energy costs, and we want to do all we can to avoid that situation.

I also have to consider three spheres of influence when creating a budget: what teachers and administrators request, what parents want for their children's instruction, and what the community, as a whole is willing to invest. In developing a budget, the instructional needs of our more than 4,500 students must be balanced with

fiscal means of our towns. The budget that I am proposing supports our curriculum and the projected rate of enrollment growth in Region 15. It is consistent with the Consumer Price Index rate of inflation for all goods and services in the Northeast.

How does your proposed budget support ongoing curriculum initiatives?

Our new mathematics program is in its implementation phase and students are very enthusiastic about learning. Our new science program is also in the implementation stage and progressing with students engaged in higher-order thinking activities and generating more hands-on scientific activities than ever before. To keep this momentum of excellence moving forward, our district will require more instructional materials for students to use for activities as well as additional professional development for teachers to improve their teaching skills. Next year, we also begin the development phase of our new social studies curriculum, which holds opportunity for students to apply reading and writing skills in a context that will enable them to be more knowledgeable about the global community. We need to have adequate funding to sustain these initiatives which I have included in my budget proposal.

Does your budget include any additional staff to support these initiatives?

This budget does not include any additional staffing. Instead, I propose that we reassign existing staff to areas that have more need. In the coming years, however, as our communities continue to grow, class size issues should be considered. And as we prepare students for the 21st century workplace and a true global community, we will need to provide programs and course offerings that help them learn how to learn. For now, though, our staffing is adequate.

How does your proposed budget support Region 15's five-year capital improvement plan?

The five-year capital improvement plan addresses maintenance and security issues at each of our seven schools. These issues include the installation of entryway security systems, which we will phase in over four years; fixing ventilation problems; removing in-ground oil tanks; installing a water control system; and replacing windows. As any homeowner knows, putting off maintenance can prove to be much more costly later than it would be if taken care of now. Our capital improvement plan establishes priorities for these maintenance and security issues over a five-year period, and my proposed 2006-2007 budget includes funding for the first year of the plan.

Social Studies Curriculum **continued from page 1**

The curriculum evaluation and revision process consists of planning, development and implementation phases. Since last year, the social studies curriculum leaders have been reviewing the current program and the State Department of Education standards and evaluating approaches to teaching social studies. The team has drafted a philosophy statement for the new curriculum and established goals that include developing an overview that will articulate learning expectations for each grade level.

In the development phase, which will begin this summer, the curriculum team and other social studies teachers will begin writing the new curriculum and selecting instructional materials. This phase will continue throughout the 2006-2007 school year. Implementation of the new curriculum is anticipated for the fall of 2007.