

SCHOOL COMMITTEE UPDATE: December - January

By Laura Salomons

Goals

In December 2009, the School Committee adopted a new set of goals for the 2010 and 2011 calendar years. Below is a list of highlights. For the complete District Improvement Plan, go to www.sharon.k12.ma.us.

1. Educational/Instructional Leadership
 - revise learning standards to reflect 21st century skills
 - review special education programs
 - utilize response to intervention (RTI)
 - evaluate homework standards
 - increase use of whiteboard technology
 - continue professional development on skillful teacher, differentiated instruction, understanding by design, technology, and social competency
2. Policy
 - complete revision of the SPS Policy Manual and put on line
3. Financial Management
 - reduce utility expenditures
 - negotiate a contract with the Sharon Teacher's Association
 - review fee based services and after school activities
4. General Management
 - establish a task force to make recommendations on High School start time
 - review roles of PTO's and School Council
 - develop a 5 – 10 year strategic plan
 - research how "lean" can be applied to education and school processes
5. Facilities
 - renovate and add to the Sharon Middle School
 - establish a task force to make recommendations regarding redistricting
6. Community Relations
 - encourage teachers to maintain websites
 - hold community forums
 - regularly issue School Committee and Superintendent newsletters
7. School Committee Relations
 - hold workshop on Robert's Rules of Order
 - update goals annually

FY'11 Budget

The current FY10 budget is approximately \$34.3 million. At a recent Priorities Committee meeting, which includes representatives from the School Committee, Selectmen, and the Finance Committee, the schools were allotted a 2.47% increase for next year, leaving them with a \$35.25 million budget for FY11. As a result, approximately \$270,000 will need to be trimmed from the final budget in order to create a contingency and to balance costs with available funding. The objective is to provide level services during the next school year. Drops in enrollment at the elementary schools and grade 6 will result in a reduced number of teaching positions. Additionally, there are plans not to replace some instructional aide and secretarial positions that will result in budget savings. It is important to note that the FY11 budget is extremely tight with no contingencies built in as there were in the past to cover unexpected costs or state funding losses. The Administration and School Committee will closely watch the budget and strategize with Town officials if additional funds are needed.

Fees

The School Committee voted a 5% increase in Early Childhood program tuitions for the 2011 school year, as well as a slight increase in tuitions for the SPS summer programs. There will be no increases in Kindergarten tuitions. Next year's bus fees are currently under consideration.

Capital Needs

Every year, Town departments, including the schools, present to the Capital Outlay Committee requests for capital projects, which are those items that have a lifespan of at least 5 years and cost more than \$10,000. This year, the schools are requesting funds that total just under \$1.2 million for technology equipment, a design for a High School roof replacement (for the older part of the building), furniture, acoustical treatment for classrooms to accommodate children's special needs, building a weight room behind the gymnasium at the high school and fixing the High School track and tennis courts. For a complete list of school capital requests, go to www.sharon.k12.ma.us and check the budgets area.

High School Start Time

A district-wide task force, involving staff, parents, and students, is currently meeting to examine research, opinions, and challenges to changing the High School start time. The task force hopes to finish its work by April when it will be further discussed at a community forum, and recommendations will be made to the School Committee.

School Calendar

The 2010-2011 school calendar, including workshop days, is now on line at www.sharon.k12.ma.us.

Education Roundtable

One of the SPS's district-wide goals is to evaluate homework standards. To that end, the School Committee and Administration will host an education roundtable at the February 24 School Committee meeting on Rethinking Homework by Cathy Vatterott. The

community dialogue will continue when Alfie Kohn, author of The Homework Myth, comes to talk to district parents, staff and students at the Sharon High Auditorium on March 8 from 7-8:30 PM. Please join us in examining the latest issues and trends in public education.

Contact Us

The School Committee is always interesting in hearing from staff, parents, students, and community members. The School Committee can be reached via e-mail at sc@sharon.k12.ma.us.