

To : Citizens of Freeport
From: Chris Leighton, School Committee Chair
Re : School Budget and Voting
Date: June 1, 2008

School Budget Approved by Town Council

On Saturday morning, May 31, the Town Council, with the School Committee in attendance, passed the combined Town and School budgets. Also present were a large number of concerned parents, all strong supporters of education, and the School Committee would like to thank all of you who attended, wrote letters or sent e-mails, and who otherwise advocated for the monies we need to continue to move education forward in Freeport. Well done!

This year the compromise on our budget was in many ways a product of the tough economic times we find ourselves in, particularly with regard to the huge increase in fuel prices. There were a number of things eliminated from our budget in order to meet the Town Council's request for a more modest mil rate increase. These are outlined in somewhat more detail below. In the end these reductions led us to a request before the Town Council for an increase which would have raised the mil rate 1.9%. This was of concern to a number of Town Councilors, and they requested that the Town Manager and the Superintendent look to new revenues and possibly some reductions in order to vote for a 1.5% mil rate increase while at the same time giving the schools the money to effectively bring the schools to the "1.9%" funding level.

The Town Manager, the Superintendent, and our financial managers met last Thursday and were able to come up with a plan to comply with the request of the Councilors. On the Town side, \$24,000 of fees and fines were identified to go to the schools. On the school side, calls to Pownal and Durham identified three new tuition students planning to attend Freeport High School. We are modestly increasing some rental fees for users of school facilities, and we will also be instituting a "late fee" for students who fail to pay fees and dues during the school year. All of this led to the vote on Saturday morning, and we now have an approved budget. Before we get to some of the details, here is some very important information!!

K-8 Math Program, *Everyday Math*, still in! We are very excited that we will be implementing this new curriculum this fall. Teachers are excited, parents are excited, and we firmly believe that this new program will reap real benefits in math performance here in Freeport.

Kindergarten Teacher-Please also note that through not replacing a retiring teacher we will be adding a Kindergarten teacher as we will have enough new students to add another class in our all day Kindergarten - very exciting!

School Budget Vote - June 10: This is very important! For the first time Freeport citizens will be voting on our school budget. The State Legislature passed a law which

requires all school district budgets to go out to a public vote. This vote, called Budget Validation Referendum or BVR, will be on June 10.

Also on the ballot will be a vote on the **bonding for the repairs to our Middle School**. Many of you will remember that we had some leakage and moisture in one of our walls at the Middle School. That wall has to come out and be replaced, but there is some good news in all of this. First, the new wall will be better insulated, and so it will add to the energy efficiency of our building. Second, through some careful planning (and particular thanks to our hardworking and creative Director of Transportation and Maintenance, Dennis Ouellette), the work is likely to come in below the initial estimates. Finally, it is being paid for by the state's revolving renovation loan fund, which means 30% of the cost (\$112,164) will be forgiven and we can pay the remainder back over five years **at zero interest**.

So, please, get out and vote, and make sure your neighbors and friends do too!!

Now for some of those details on the School budget reductions for 2008 - 2009:

Community Ed reduced- will need to increase fees and cut expenses
High School Math Teacher (new request) - eliminated
ESL Teacher - reduced by one day per week
Educational Technician - shift to grant funding
Athletic Trainer - eliminated
Athletics - reduced funding for supplies
Equipment - reduction at two schools
Library Books – reduction at three schools
Supplies - reduced at high school
Director of Instructional Improvement/Professional Development- reduction
RSU Start-up Costs – eliminated from budget; if needed TBD

If you have questions about the vote, the budget, or the bond project please contact any of our Board members or Administrators.