

School capital budget reviewed

By Michaela Kennedy

The School Committee reviewed the capital reserve budget in its continuing series of school budget discussions last Thursday, Feb. 8. The next workshop is slated for tonight at Lawn Avenue School, and the general budget will be discussed.

The committee opened the meeting with a moment of silence for School Committee Member James Filkins, who passed away on Feb. 6. Committee Chairwoman Cathy Kaiser expressed gratitude for Filkins' contributions to the community.

In open forum, Donna Perry, co-chairwoman of the town's Special Education Local Advisory Committee or SELAC spoke in support of the proposed special education budget presented the previous week by Director of Student Services Elizabeth Pinto.

On behalf of SELAC, Perry praised the integrated classroom experience in the Jamestown schools. "This is done for as much

of the day as is possible for as many of the special education students as possible," she said. Perry quoted a comment made by Anthony Antosh, director of the Sherlock Center on Disabilities at Rhode Island College, printed in a Providence Journal article on Jan. 21: "When you look at the national research, there is no doubt in my mind . . . kids who participate in the general-education curriculum perform better and have better outcomes when they come out of school."

She expressed appreciation for the town's commitment to integrated classrooms, and recognized the costs involved. Perry reminded the school board that the integrated classroom approach meant "we are adhering to state and national expectations."

The SELAC has suggested keeping the special education staff at the present levels, Perry added.

Jill Harrison of Sloop Street praised the town's organized efforts to guide special needs stu-

dents. "It's been a tremendous windfall for us to be here in Jamestown," she said

Superintendent Robert Power introduced Director of School Facilities Lewis Kitts, who presented the capital reserve projects to be funded in the upcoming fiscal year. "The children of Jamestown have benefited greatly from the efforts of Mr. Kitts and his men," he said. Power acknowledged the town's significant investment in energy-saving and environmentally-friendly improvements.

"I think Jamestown has been a model when it comes to capital expenditures. Jamestown is head and shoulders above any place else. Jamestown can be proud of the conditions of its schools," Power said in his praise of the town's commitment to facilities maintenance.

Many energy-saving recommendations made at the Rhode Island Energy Summit were already implemented at the schools, Kitts noted in his presentation. Suggestions included motion detectors and energy efficient devices, he said.

In the review of Melrose Avenue School's budget, Kitts noted line items carried over from last year. Included in the costs for Melrose were \$30,000 for roof repairs and \$8,000 for the bi-fold door covering of the multi-purpose room.

The biggest expense for the school was the fire alarm upgrade at \$28,000. "Our systems at Melrose and Lawn are no longer manufactured. If there's a breakdown in either system, we are unable to get replacement parts," Kitts said. He explained that Melrose would receive the upgrade, and then they could use parts from Melrose as replacements for Lawn school.

"There's nothing wrong with the system except that we can't get repair parts," Kitts added.

Estimated costs in the capital budget for Melrose school totaled \$101,750.

The largest expense for Lawn Avenue School was windows. Kitts proposed \$50,000 for exterior classroom windows and treatments, and \$20,000 for cafeteria windows. "Twenty windows will be installed by the April vacation," Kitts said, noting that only those that opened would be replaced. He also said the windows were in bad shape when he started working here 16 years ago. "I think the energy savings from the windows will help us a lot. Working windows is the problem," he added.

Kitts went on to address water savings with installations of waterless urinals. "If you maintain them, they work great. Somewhere between eight to 10 thousand gallons of water a year is saved," he said. He detailed the cost per urinal to be \$400, with \$200 for installation. The total cost for the water-saving devices was estimated at \$8,700.

Perry mentioned uncomfortably warm temperatures during the summer for the special education program. "It's a 12-month program, and there were dangerously warm temperatures in that school (Melrose)," she said.

Air-flow standards were met for both schools, but offered to return with a report on options for air conditioned rooms for the program, Kitts responded.

The proposed capital budget for both schools totaled \$214,000.

In a discussion about the general budget, Power fielded questions about line items. Power told the committee that under-budgeting for substitutes in the past forced and increase for the upcoming fiscal year. He also explained that after-school programs needed more money. "If we're going to expand the enrichment program, we need to bolster the funds," he said.

When asked about high school tuition expenses, Power said they were still waiting to see what percentage of students would go to private schools. He noted that 60 students would graduate from the current eighth-grade class.

An increase in student-assistance services was questioned by the committee. Power said that typically grants supported the services. Principal Kathleen Almanzor noted that the school district had accessed a special grant for one year only "that won't be accessible next year."

Committee member William "Bucky" Brennan objected to the services. "I recall when the position came up. It was an additional position that I could not support because it was grant-funded, and I knew down the road we would have to pay for it," he said.

Almanzor countered Brennan's opinion, saying substance abuse problems were present. "There is a need and it's backed up by data. It has become a community partnership aspect," she said.

Addressing bus expenses, Power said the district would go out to bid on the bus contract.

Assistant Finance Director Maria Laferriere said the bid request would probably go out by March.

For the record

In the "Water plant construction could begin this summer" article written by Dotti Farrington, the Rhode Island Clean Water Finance Agency (RICWFA) is the fund administrator of the State Revolving Loan Funds for Wastewater Pollution Control and for Safe Drinking Water Projects. As such, the RICWFA is the lead agency that provides funding for approved projects. Department of Health administers the regulatory aspect of the program.

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- restraint (prevention of further criminal action by the convicted perpetrator);
- deterrence (demonstrating to others the consequences of crime);
- rehabilitation (providing time and a setting to teach the perpetrator proper conduct); and
- punishment (in a just society bad behavior merits a bad consequence).

Whether the criminal justice system achieves any of those objectives is, of course, an on-going debate.

A society founded upon justice and fairness deprives the criminal of any "excuse" for his/her criminal conduct.

Fifties trivia: What popular uptempo song included the lyric "oh happy Africa"? This question has, so far, stumped the readers of The Walrus. But now you can win a prize for a correct answer. E-mail your response to johna@murphys-law.net.

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