

School

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on staffing positions. "It seems strange to have a job fair and give people the illusion that they can pick," she said. Committee member Julie Kallfelz agreed, adding that communication between teachers and administrators was important. "Precedent holds little weight with me. Just because you've done it, doesn't mean it's the best way to do it," she said. "Administration ultimately should be the decision maker. The process leading to a decision needs to be a cooperative one."

Phil Capaldi, fourth grade teacher, called the job fair "a beautiful tool for teachers who are displaced." He voiced concern that an administrative decision to move a teacher from a cooperative teaching team could be seen

in a negative light. "I would like to have a round table discussion. If we have to pass tests to be highly qualified, then tell us if there is a problem with X or Y team," he suggested. "How is a move not a reflection on my performance?"

Kaiser agreed that if something was wrong with a co-teaching team, "absolutely there should be communication with the teachers, and administrators would say why."

Kallfelz added, "You are entrusting your administrators to make good decisions. In the end, it's management's decision and we're holding management accountable."

In old business, the panel members voted 3-1 against the adoption of a revised draft policy that would officially limit the school department's unreserved fund balance. The committee agreed to cap this year's unreserved fund

at 5 percent of the most recently audited budget, and return any excess funds to the town.

Brennan made the motion to accept the policy. He objected to holding back, saying that the committee would be backpedaling from a course of action already agreed upon by the panel. Other committee members noted concern about the tax levy law, upcoming court disputes and retirement pay questions. "If we find that the balance is dropping significantly below the five percent, there is no recourse. We wouldn't be able to replenish it in any way," Held said. Kallfelz agreed, saying the school department was "seeing an extraordinary year of litigation."

Kaiser said she hated to vote against a policy which she agreed with, but did not think this year was a good time to accept it. She suggested waiting one year and

making a decision about the policy at the end of the year.

The committee went on to unanimously accept a revised policy regarding summer school.

In a discussion about the proposed budget, the committee considered a Town Council suggestion that town workers landscape the area surrounding the generator outside Melrose Avenue School. The move would reduce the capital budget by \$5,000. Brennan said the change would work as long as the department of public works followed the landscape architect's plan. He pointed out the chosen plantings would be expensive.

Charlene Tuttle, fourth grade teacher, asked the committee to consider using indigenous plants. Students studied native vegetation, and invasive plants might affect local species, she noted.

Brennan went on to say that since two teachers would retire,

new teachers hired at a lower income step could save "a significant amount."

Lukon recommended waiting to vote on the adjusted budget, noting added expenses to special education and retiree reimbursement for sick days. "It's still early yet," she added.

The committee agreed to make final adjustments to its budget at the April 24 business meeting.

In response to a letter from North Kingstown to legislators about level funding, the committee agreed to write a similar resolution asking legislators to fund Rhode Island public schools for next year's budget with an amount no less than the state aid earmarked in the current budget year.

The committee voted to move the May workshop meeting from May 1 to May 8.

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Adoption Rhode Island announces their Fifth Annual Spring Celebration, "A Night in the Tropics," to be held at the Roger Williams Park Botanical Gardens on Saturday, May 3, from 7 to 10 p.m.

Enjoy a festive night out at this beautiful venue while helping to support Rhode Island children in need of permanent families. This lively event will feature music, food stations from some of Rhode Island's best chefs, complimentary wine and beer, and more. Rhode Island's third annual Heart Gallery will

also be on display, showcasing twenty professional portraits of children in state care who are waiting to be adopted.

Adoption Rhode Island is a private non-profit organization dedicated to finding families for children in state care and supporting those children and families throughout the adoption process.

Tickets are \$75 per person. Call Adoption Rhode Island at 724-1910 or email adoptionri@adoptionri.org.

Patty Larkin to perform at Common Fence Point

Common Fence Music presents singer-songwriter Patty Larkin on Saturday, April 12, at 8 p.m. at the Common Fence Point Community Hall, 933 Anthony Rd. in Portsmouth.

Tickets are \$22 and are available at the CFM Ticket Desk from 3 to 5 p.m. on concert days, through Ticket

Web anytime, and at the door until sold out.

Call Ticket Web's toll free number at 866-468-7619 or contact them via www.commonfencemusic.org. For general information, including directions to the hall, call 683-5085 or visit the website. Doors open at 7 p.m.

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