

# Budget

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this budget approved and we'll deal with those issues later." The council then voted to approve the \$20 million spending package.

Kelly asked to go on record saying that had the budgets been separated, he would have voted against the \$11.7 million school portion.

Sutton, who has openly questioned the administrative structure as well as the costs of the proposed school budget, said that although he voted for approval, "I'm not sure how I would have voted if the budgets were separate."

Kelly expressed frustration at having to vote for a package deal.

During discussions, Councilwoman Barbara Szeptowski told Sutton, "I think you owe the school committee an apology," for his negative attitude and for attacking the school budget. She also asked him how much time he spent in the schools.

"I wouldn't bet your last dollar I don't understand what goes on in the schools," Sutton replied.

When Kelly was asked for his comments on the budget, he challenged Szeptowski's admonishment of Sutton by saying, "I'm not attacking the school budget. I'm questioning the school budget."

Kelly said that he didn't think enough had been done to partner with other school districts on ways to cut costs by sharing services, and questioned the reasoning behind the small class sizes.

DiGiando and Councilman Michael White explained to Kelly that many of the smaller class sizes were due to the requirements mandated by state and federal regulations to absorb special needs students. They also explained that, to justify the need for assistants in small classes, some of the students required one-on-one attention.

Several weeks ago Sutton wrote a letter to fellow council members outlining his concerns with the administrative structure and history of the school administration. He also questioned some of the salaries and costs that he said he found puzzling. Much of the letter was published in the Jamestown Press.

School Committee Chairwoman Cathy Kaiser responded to Sutton's allegations and concerns in a "Viewpoint" that was also published in the Press. She said that the federal No Child Left Behind act mandated a host of bureaucratic responsibilities and reports for school administrators. She later noted that funds did not accompany the additional work, and the staff was working extremely hard to keep up with the workload.

She also gave a justification for the difference between the administrative salaries and teacher's salaries, saying that administrators work year-round while teachers do not.

Kaiser stood firmly behind having two principals, one for kindergarten through fourth grade at the Melrose School, and another for fifth-to eighth-graders at the Lawn Avenue School. She said the curriculum and responsibilities were entirely different and that the practice of having a principal for both the elementary school and the middle school was the standard in most school systems whether they were in separate buildings or not.

She said that even if the Town Council cut the school budget, the committee would not retreat from its plan to have principals in both buildings. The Town Council is permitted to challenge and even cut the proposed school budget. However, it cannot dictate how the money is spent.

Currently, one principal is at the Lawn Avenue School and an assistant principal is at Melrose. However, the budget for 2008-2009 calls for the assistant prin-

cipal to be promoted to full principal status.

Szeptowski suggested, "The council should consider meeting more often with the School Committee so that future budget talks will be less contentious." Kaiser said she was willing to have more frequent talks providing there was a "dialogue and not a monologue."

Kaiser added, "This was the worst year I've ever experienced in the budget approval process and I hope we never have to go through it like this again."

Sutton acknowledged that the process was frustrating for everyone. He said, "I admit I don't know all the requirements of managing a school system. But when reviewing administrative costs and budgets, there are certain things that raise red flags, and it is our duty as the Town Council to question those issues."

After the meeting, Sutton said, "We are responsible for spending \$20 million of taxpayers' money. That is a very serious responsibility. Our job as a council is to use that money as efficiently as possible. It is the job of the school committee to give our students the best education possible, and they work very hard to do just that. However, occasionally there are going to be issues and differences of opinion that need to be worked out. I don't believe I'm always right. If I'm proven wrong, that's fine. But questions need to be answered. It's not easy for any of us. It can be very frustrating."

After deliberations, Chairman DiGiando recognized that Sutton had some valid concerns. He also said that Kaiser and the school committee had a strong case for supporting two principals. Town Administrator Bruce Keiser said that some of Councilman Kelly's ideas should be explored, and council members Szeptowski and White supported the school as well as the municipal budget.

Szeptowski acknowledged the fine job that the town administrator and his staff did on compiling the municipal budget.

The Town Council unanimously approved the budget for presentation to the voters at the Financial Town Meeting, scheduled for Monday, June 2.

If approved by the voters, the budget will increase the property tax rate to \$8.11 per \$1,000 of assessed value, which amounts to a 30-cent increase. Taxes on property valued at \$500,000 will increase by approximately \$150.



This Sunday, Charlotte Richardson, second from right in back row, will celebrate Mother's Day with four generations of her family.

# Mother

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minutes of stepping off the ferry, Charlotte, much to her surprise, fell in love with Jamestown.

Charlotte went on to marry Victor, a native islander himself, and they moved into their new home in March of 1953. "The stairs weren't even in it," Charlotte recalls.

When their four daughters were young, Charlotte remembers, they would pick the tops of flowers off the stems and give them to her as presents. She floated them in water for display. "I wouldn't trade them for anything else," Charlotte said about the gifts of love.

"As the kids were growing up, I remember May Day," Charlotte smiles with the memories. "The kids used to dance around the Maypole. They used to wrap small ice cream containers with crepe paper, decorating it to look like a basket of flowers. It was great sport to leave the baskets, knocking on the door and running and hiding. Of course we pretended we were surprised when we answered the door!"

Now, Charlotte looks over four generations that have followed. Their family has outgrown the house that Victor and Charlotte built together. "There are 19 of us when we all are together,"

Charlotte said. The youngest, Pamela, was the only daughter to have children of her own. "She's the grandmother of all the great grandchildren. It took me ten years to get four grandkids, but it only took her four years," Charlotte said. Pamela reminded her that babies come faster when more than one mother is involved, she adds.

Charlotte counts down to her great grandchildren. In addition to four daughters, she names four granddaughters, three great granddaughters and one great grandson. "When our granddaughter moved on to our land, they were fifth and sixth generations."

Everyone in the family is within traveling distance, Charlotte happily reports. Daughter Gaylin is farthest away in Maine, but still only a few hours' drive from Jamestown. The children continue to be attentive, working in the yard, and doing chores around the house. And they still bring her flowers.

In recent years, Charlotte has helped cultivate the Conanicut Grange and the Friends of Jamestown Seniors. She continues to volunteer her time, but remembers her earlier springs and Mother's Days on the rock as if they were yesterday. "It seems like it whizzed by, when you look back on it," Charlotte said.

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