

Cape Elizabeth Schools

To: Cape Elizabeth Town Councilors
From: Meredith Nadeau, Superintendent of Schools
Date: April 4, 2013
Subject: Fiscal Year 2014 Budget Overview

This remains a particularly challenging budget year for Cape Elizabeth and for school districts across the state. While the legislature is still reviewing the Governor's education proposal, the proposal for the first time adds new costs to the district budget by shifting the cost of teacher retirement to the school district. For Cape Elizabeth, those new costs total \$300,000. The Governor's budget does add some additional revenue to the General Purpose Aid to schools, but the net impact of the combined proposals results in a net loss of \$132,000 in revenue to Cape Elizabeth.

As you are aware, last summer's facilities study identified approximately \$10 million worth of capital needs for the district which need to be addressed in the coming decade. The district currently spends roughly \$1.5 million/year, between debt service payments and capital improvement spending and increasing our overall spending in that area is critical to making sure that we have sound, healthy facilities for learning both now and in the future. This year's budget increases the total amount of spending in capital/debt service by \$100,000 to begin to tackle the most critical code and safety components identified in the study. Work on the 10-year capital plan continues.

The operating budget for the schools also includes some proposed changes in staffing. Some of these changes are driven by enrollment trends and others are in response to evolving changes in education and information coming out of the district's work to develop a strategic plan to implement the vision, mission, and values adopted by the School Board last spring.

Next year's enrollment projections show enrollment for the district to be 200 students below the enrollment in 2005-2006, an 11% decrease. Projections through 2020-2021 forecast a similar decline in enrollment over the next 8 years, an approximately 12% decrease. As a result, the district has to look very carefully at programs and

services and, when it can, consider whether or not to fill vacancies created by retirements.

This year, the budget proposal includes the elimination of a 6th grade teaching position, a .5 world language position, and a .5 Ed. Tech. III position in special education, all based on enrollment.

Another staffing change in the proposed budget is not related to cost savings, but, rather, an examination of service delivery models in library services and instructional technology. New program offerings at institutions of higher learning such as Columbia Teacher's College and, in our own backyard, Plymouth State University in New Hampshire, are offering programs which lead to dual certification in Library Media and Technology Integration in recognition of the fact that while libraries continue to be a hub of schools, the role of the traditional librarian has evolved to include support for media and technology literacy.

At Pond Cove, the technology integrator position and computer lab positions would be replaced by a Technology Teacher position which aligns with the current service delivery model at Pond Cove but would enhance and integrate the technology instruction provided at that level with an eye toward developing the digital citizenship and informational literacy skills needed by our students. At the middle and high schools, the library and technology integration services would be integrated, and the current model of 2 librarians and 2 technology integrators would be replaced by 3 professionals with a working title of "Media and Instructional Technology Specialists." District administrators have been working collaboratively with the current library and technology staff at the middle and high schools to plan for these changes and are committed to providing high quality services to students and faculty through these changes and making sure that the district is poised to enhance learning in the classrooms of today and the future.

The Pond Cove budget proposes the conversion of two of the existing half-day kindergarten sections to full-day using existing staff and space within the kindergarten wing. Necessary teacher materials will be purchased from funds available during the current school year. A smaller staffing proposal is the addition of a .2 teacher position at the high school to build a curriculum for robotics and to begin to make such learning available to students across the district during the school day.

Finally, the proposed budget would make two administrative changes. One would be to change the teacher leader position at Pond Cove to an Assistant Principal to participate in the supervision and evaluation of staff,

sustain a safe and inclusive learning environment, and help to balance the need for organizational management with the need for educational leadership at Pond Cove. The other would be to shift the literacy coordinator position at the district level to that of a Director of Instruction, a position which would parallel the Director of Instructional Support position, and would oversee curriculum and assessment, professional development, and teacher certification K-12; this shift also poises the district to move forward with the implementation of the strategic plan and adds no new costs to the budget.

The budget challenges have caused the administrative team to look critically at the needs for all positions, and the district will be going without some previously funded positions moving forward. One of those is an administrative support position at the high school, another is the half-time reduction of an administrative support position for school nursing services, and the third is the part-time certification coordinator position at the district level. While the district has great regard for the employees in these positions and their work, we have had to make tough decisions to preserve the focus on student learning and, at the same time, to keep costs at a reasonable level.

The proposed FY14 budget represents a 3.5% increase in expenditures, 1.4% of which is due to the new cost of teacher retirement. The projected impact on a median home of \$314,000 for the education portion of the budget is \$143 or an increase of \$.46 per thousand.