

Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee
Mt. Everett Regional School
Sheffield, MA
February 27, 2014
Open Public Hearing Re: FY'15 Budget

School Committee Members: Mr. Stewart, Ms. Silvers, Ms. Rundle, Mr. Valentini, Mr. Batacchi, Ms. Sahn, Mr. Sears, Ms. Sparhawk, Ms. Fields, Mr. Flynn

Absent:

Administration: Mr. Hastings, Mr. Turner

Press: CTSB

Student Representatives:

Others: Mr. Thomas Berkel, Egremont Finance Committee; Mr. Andrew Rapport; Mr. Wayne Burkhart, Monterey Select Board; Mr. & Mrs. Fuchs, of Sheffield; Ms. Danielle Goewey; Ms. Linda Higgins

Chairman Stewart called the meeting to order at 6:17 p.m. and welcomed the town officials and other audience members. He then turned the floor over to Mr. Valentini, Chairman of the Finance Subcommittee.

Mr. Valentini explained that at the request of the Finance Subcommittee, the Superintendent and administrators had made approximately \$160,000 in reductions from the budget that had been presented on February 6. At Mr. Valentini's request, Mr. Turner then reviewed the Public Hearing Document, noting areas of significant increases, including health insurance, which presented an 8% increase this year. He noted that the budget now reflects a 1.5% overall increase over that of FY'14.

Mr. Turner then reviewed anticipated revenues and projected town assessments.

Superintendent Hastings noted that the District has been trying to work together in partnership with the towns to understand their concerns and to acknowledge that the schools' population is declining. He stated that painful staffing cuts have been made, but those cuts will not affect what the students get out of the program. He said that they had worked hard to develop a budget that the towns will find acceptable.

A question and answer session then took place. Mr. Fuchs, of Sheffield, spoke, noting that approximately 25% of Sheffield's population consists of senior citizens who live on fixed incomes. He encouraged the Committee to remember that their neighbors have to come up with the money to fund any increases in the budget each year and noted that often seniors have to choose between buying medicine, food, and heating their homes and cannot afford increased taxes.

Mr. Wayne Burkhart also spoke, thanking the administrators and School Committee for the work they did to pare down the budget. He stated that he could not argue against a budget proposing less than a 2 – 2.5% increase. Mr. Burkhart also expressed the hope that the District would work to maintain the community schools while the towns decide what to do with them.

At Mr. Burkhart's request, Mr. Turner explained that the tuition line item represents anticipated residential placements.

Mr. Valentini stated that reductions had been made in twenty-four separate areas, including the reduction of one teaching position, one special needs ESP position, and a library ESP.

Mr. Sears moved, seconded by Mr. Flynn, to adjourn the meeting. It was so voted, and the public hearing adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Documents presented for this meeting:

- *"Presentation of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District FY'15 Budget – Budget Hearing February 27, 2014"*