

***FY10 LEVEL FUNDING
BUDGET PRESENTATION
JANUARY 14, 2009***

At the School Committee meeting on January 14, 2009, a presentation was given as to what the Milton Public Schools would look like if they were to receive level funding. Listed below is a summary of questions asked at this presentation. This Q&A will be updated on a regular basis and the public is encouraged to send questions via email to the Superintendent's Office.

Q. In the presentation you list FTE positions and an amount for a reduction. Is the amount listed an actual salary? If so, shouldn't the savings in health care insurance, workers' compensation insurance, and unemployment insurance associated with this salary also be included in the reduction?

A. The amount shown next to the FTE column represents an average salary. In working with the Finance Subcommittee, it was agreed to use an average figure of \$54,000 for a teacher's salary. Health insurance, Worker's Compensation and Unemployment Insurance, and any other Employee Benefit savings are in the Town's budget and are not appropriated in the School Department budget. Savings in Health Insurance and Workers' Compensation Insurance would be reduced significantly in the first year by the cost of providing Unemployment Benefits to those laid off.

Q. What is the breakdown of the \$50,000 reduction in utility costs from closing a school?

A. This is a partial savings as we will not totally "close" a building. We analyzed all utilities (water, gas, phone, and electricity), and estimated the savings possible if we were to close parts of a building. These are preliminary estimates as no decision has been made as to which building would (temporarily) close. Since the building would still be used for other purposes (preschool), this is an estimate for decreased use of a building and not "shutting it down" entirely.

Q. Have energy audits been done at the schools?

A. The **free** energy audits available to homeowners from NStar and other local utility companies are done with grant funding offered through utility companies. For 800,000 square feet of space those same vendors have not offered free energy audits. We are in the process of procuring energy audits. We have integrated many energy conservation measures and followed recommendations for efficient energy use in each of our (new) buildings. Please note that each of these new buildings were built following energy conservation recommendations as an integral component of the building project(s).

Q. What are the details of the Energy Initiative?

A. The Facilities Subcommittee has been meeting on an on-going basis and has had several discussions relating to energy savings. We are looking to enter into a contract for energy education and consultation to procure services from a provider that is able to come into our school buildings and recommend ways to achieve energy savings. Any charges for this program would be paid from the savings achieved. We are seeking a multi-year contract as opposed to the typical three-year contract; therefore, this procurement requires the approval of Town Meeting. The School Committee has submitted an article for inclusion in the Warrant for the February 23, 2009 Special town Meeting.

Q. Can teachers be asked to re-open their contract negotiations to discuss a freeze on wages for a one year period?

Can parents approach teachers to ask them to consider this?

A. The School Committee may ask the Union to re-open negotiations; however, there is not an option for the School Committee to demand negotiations be re-opened. This contract was negotiated and settled in 2007, prior to the current economic crisis, and was settled in good faith with the teachers. The School Committee unequivocally states it would be inappropriate for any parent or community member to approach teachers with respect to contract negotiations. Any request to re-open contract negotiations may only come from the School Committee or the Union.

Q. Why was participation in the GIC not a requisite during contract negotiations?

A. Health insurance is not a topic for bargaining between the Union and the School Committee. Health Insurance negotiations is solely responsibility of Board of Selectmen through the Town Administrator.

Q. What is the process for tapping into the stabilization fund?

A. This requires a Town Board or the signatures of ten (10) citizens to include an article in the Town Meeting Warrant. Any money put in or taken out of the stabilization fund requires a vote of Town Meeting.

Q. How will you determine which elementary school will close?

A. We are awaiting input from the State Building Authority (SBA). They will have GREAT weight in our decision. No determination has been made yet. The closing of a school is a “worst case” scenario. The Cunningham and Tucker Schools were discussed as options for closure as they were mentioned by the SBA as the two smallest elementary schools.

Q. What is meant by the FY11 Recovery Override?

A. Three years ago an override was passed which allowed us to expand programming. If Fiscal Year 2010 is level funded, this would be the third year in a row of level funding. A FY11 Recovery Override notation in our budget would be the amount of money needed to get the School system back to what it looked like in Fiscal year 2007.

- Q. Are the elementary classrooms large enough to hold 30+ students?**
A. Yes. All elementary classrooms were designed to be the same size with the Kindergarten classrooms being larger. Although having 30 students in a classroom is not the optimal option, it can be done.
- Q. Why can't we re-vamp the Kindergarten classrooms?**
A. The School Building Authority would revoke our state reimbursement if we were to do this. This would amount to millions of dollars.
Also, donations were made by the Copeland Family Foundation and the Cunningham Foundation specifically for the construction of these classrooms.
- Q. Is there a way to identify the financial impact of an override on each household in Milton?**
A. Yes. This information is always published in the local papers and is advertised by the town once it has been established. A ballpark estimate is that it would cost each household \$125 per million requested in an override.
- Q. What is the total amount for salary adjustments (contractual raises) for FY10?**
A. There is a total of \$1.373Million in salary increases included (for all employees) in the FY10 Budget.
- Q. Where can a resident get actual numbers on what the GIC costs for health insurance and retirement benefits?**
A. The Selectmen's office. Information regarding the cost of health insurance and retirement can be found in the Town's group insurance budget. Town Administrator Kevin Mearn is the lead negotiator with respect to the GIC.
- Q. If Cunningham were to close, you still have the energy cost of operating that building. What is being saved?**
A. Partial savings based upon decreasing ventilation in unused portions of the building. If we were to close an elementary school whether it is Cunningham or Tucker, we are considering the option of moving pre-school classes into that building. It is important to note that the "school closing" is considered more of an administrative closure than a physical closure. We would be changing the use of a building.
- Q. Could you clarify Circuit Breaker reimbursement and Medicaid reimbursement?**
A. Circuit Breaker is reimbursement that comes from the state for extraordinary and/or expensive special education services. This reimbursement (from the State) is intended to lessen the impact of extraordinary special education expenses upon the local school budget(s). Medicaid reimbursements are monies given to the school system for other (non-educational) special education services provided to eligible students.