

School Budget .

The Process - Overview

It takes almost a year to put together and pass the school system's budget. Starting in the summer all buildings are examined for major maintenance requirements. Then, toward the end of September the Central Office starts to review anticipated needs and estimate costs for the proposed budget year. At the same time, the Principals for each school prepare a budget that reflects their buildings needs regarding staffing, supplies, and other costs. These budget requests are forwarded to the superintendent and her staff for review.

Keep in mind that in addition to the sixteen schools, there are other expenses to be considered. These include, but are not limited to, insurance, Education Special Needs, capital maintenance, technology, new program initiatives, transportation and central administration functions. Taken into account are projections on enrollment, staff retirements and attrition, estimated cost sharing funds received from the State and Federal governments, increased expenditures for the purchase of goods and services and contractual obligations, etc.

Throughout October, November and December the superintendent takes all these budgets and projections into account, weighing the costs against our desire for a sound education curriculum and well maintained infrastructure, before making a final district wide education budget proposal.

In January the Superintendent presents the proposed budget to the Board of Education at open public meetings at which time citizens are welcome to comment. The Board of Education can accept the proposal, or make adjustments by cutting or increasing expenditures.

Once the Board of Education completes and passes the budget at an open meeting it is presented to the Board of Selectman and the Board of Finance. This process again takes place at open public meetings usually in February and March. The public is welcome to attend these meetings and comment is welcome.

The Selectmen may vote to reduce the budget or maintain it as proposed. This vote is merely a recommendation to the Finance Board as they may then choose to modify the budget further with an increase or decrease. They may also choose to accept the budget as proposed.

The final step in the Education budget process occurs when the proposed budget is presented to the Representative Town Meeting (RTM). The RTM meets the last week in April and the first week in May. These meetings are also open to the public and citizens are given a chance to comment. One very important aspect about the RTM is that they may only cut the budget, or accept it as proposed. The RTM is prohibited by Town Charter from increasing it. The RTM meeting during the first week of May is when the town formally accepts both the Education budget and the Town side budget.