

From the School Committee

We wish you and your family a very happy holiday season. December brings hectic schedules, but often winter holiday festivities as well. The shorter days also come with sparkly lights and our children's hope for that snow day that just might be called with any threat of snow.

December also brings our annual appeal for your input in the budget process. I know that most of you have heard this before – don't stop reading yet. Instead, please consider this overview a reminder of how the budget process works and your personal (well, maybe not so personal) invitation to participate in that process. Think of it as that annual holiday party – wouldn't you be disappointed if you weren't invited? *You are hereby cordially invited to offer your comment on the 2008-2009 budget for the Sudbury Public Schools.* You don't even have to dress up. Here are the details:

Event Preparations: Each school year, we immediately start the year thinking ahead to the *following* year. From September through November, the initial stages of the process involve the District's internal projections for student enrollment and for anticipated costs. The School Committee has some initial discussions of the budget. At the same time, the Town is working on its revenue forecast – attempting to look ahead to anticipated state aid, property taxes, and other local sources of revenue. The Town Finance Committee issues its budget guidelines letter outlining the information and budget scenarios it seeks from each of the primary “cost centers” – that is, the Sudbury Public Schools, Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School, and the Town government. Designated liaisons of the cost centers meet with their counterparts on the Finance Committee to discuss the information collected, and this information is brought together and presented to the Finance Committee as a whole.

Preliminary Events: In December – that is, *now* – the School Committee must decide on various budget scenarios to be presented to the Finance Committee and a recommended budget to be submitted for the Town Meeting warrant. The Superintendent presents tentative budget scenarios and the School Committee holds a public hearing to gather input before voting on a recommended budget. Your presence is requested. Here are the key dates for your calendar:

December 5, 2007, 7:30 p.m., at Fairbank Community Center. The School Committee will hold a public hearing on the budget for 2008-2009, as a portion of its regular meeting. The Superintendent will present background information and proposed budget scenarios and there will be an opportunity for public comments.

December 12, 2007, 7:30 p.m., at Fairbank Community Center. The School Committee will vote on a budget for next year. The vote must be taken at this time to meet the Town By-law deadline. At this point, the Committee typically votes on a budget targeted on school needs and priorities. The voted budget represents the highest spending level authorized for the following year. Ultimately, the actual budget may be adjusted in light of available revenue.

During January and early February, the Finance Committee holds its public hearings on the budget. The Finance Committee will hear presentations about budget needs from the School Districts and the Town. The schedule of the budget hearings is on the Town website and these meetings are televised on the local cable channel. Here is another key date for your calendar:

January 14, 2008, 7:30 p.m., at Lower Town Hall. The Sudbury Public Schools will present its budget information to the Finance Committee.

The Finance Committee is required to present voters with a balanced non-override budget, to make a recommendation on any proposed override budget, and to make recommendations on any financial articles. During this time, a budget working group involving members of the Finance Committee, the Selectmen, and the School Committees reviews the revenue projections available at that point and considers the various budget needs to propose an allocation of the total budget and recommendations concerning any override proposal. Around the end of January, all information that will be printed in the warrant must be finalized, although the information (especially concerning revenue projections for state aid) is incomplete at that point. Please remember this as you leaf through your warrant during Town Meeting. Which brings us to . . .

The Big Event: All Sudbury voters are invited to the big event when the Town as a whole makes the final decision on the budget. This year, Town Meeting will commence on **Monday, April 7, 2008.** Please be there. Also, in any year that the Selectmen propose an override budget, that budget must pass at Town meeting and at a Town Election. By Town Meeting, additional information may be available concerning projections of state aid or other revenues (although final numbers generally come over the summer). Budget information will be presented and discussed before you and the other Sudbury residents have the final word.

Of course, you will be hearing more about the budget in the coming months. Information about the Sudbury Public Schools budget will be on the District website and will be regularly updated. Unlike that holiday party invitation, your invitation to participate in the budget process is not limited; it extends throughout the year. Please attend any of our School Committee meetings or feel free to contact any member of the School Committee with your questions or comments. No RSVP required.

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For the School Committee