

ROCKPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE 20/21 Budget Overview
Held at the Town of Rockport Library
17 School Street, Rockport MA 01966
MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING
Wednesday December 11, 2019

Chairperson Michael Kelley called the regular meeting of the Rockport School Committee to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Rockport Public Library. Present were Nicole Altieri, Colleen Coogan, Richard Drost, Michael Kelley, and Cathy Reilly. Also, present were Superintendent Robert Liebow and Recording Secretary Ingrid Keating.

I. Opening of Regular Meeting

Thank you all for coming tonight to a very special Rockport School Committee meeting.

I'm Michael Kelley, current chair of the Rockport School Committee, joined by the entire committee tonight. Nicole Altieri, co-chair, Colleen Coogan immediate past chair, committee members Rick Drost and Cathy Reilly and Rob Liebow, Superintendent of Schools.

Normally we hold our twice a month meetings in the middle school library, but occasionally we have heard the comment that some town residents might be reluctant to come to the middle school -- I don't know why, I think you are all former middle schoolers -- so we thought we would schedule a special session here in the Library.

You are all more than welcome to come to our meetings -- we deal with more than the budget and you can certainly get a panoramic view of what both children and educators face as daily challenges in the second decade of the 21st Century -- I think you would be amazed at how different a world they live in compared to the one we went to school in. The beauty of Rockport has a timeless quality to it, but the world a K-12 student will enter upon graduation surrounds us and evolves for good and bad at a furious pace. You would be impressed by the teachers you employ and the students they impact. If you attend you would also find when the chair buys too much Halloween candy and is prevented by his spouse from eating it all himself, he distributes it. Here is the last bag and I'm going to make it easy on you.

Tonight's meeting is special because it has only one topic: The School budget which will be joined this year by a Prop 2.5 override request. Normally and annually we build the budget in a series of 3-5 public sessions as required by Mass. State law before submission to the public for discussion and approval at Spring Town Meeting.

The goal of this meeting is to show you how we arrived at this decision.

The school budget is complex, more complex than any other budget in town because its sole focus by state law is the intellectual, social and emotional development of children in a safe environment over the course of more than a decade. The budget has to accommodate being governed by evolving and often unpredictable federal and state mandates, some funded, some underfunded, some reimbursed real-time, some a year later, the need to negotiate periodically with bargaining units and unions, the challenges of managing a physical plant and the challenge of operating in loco parentis -- in the place of a parent.

So what happens when you have complexity and expense intersecting with the town's competing needs, competing agendas and limited funding? And all of this amplified by social media?

Often you have oversimplification and opinion replacing expertise and planning. You have people trying to compare the budget to what they have experienced in home or in business. But the metaphor doesn't hold. Children aren't widgets, don't develop at the same rate or have the same needs.

That's why we are here tonight. We are going to give you an overview of the process, the terminology and the inputs and outputs that you will need to understand the budget, show you the planning for next year and beyond, show you how this year's budget was built, what it contains and why we are asking for an override.

Let's take a look at the agenda.

II. Community Participation

A. Public Participation

IV. Information and proposals

Superintendent Liebow explained the annual School budget components, the long-range planning, a 2020-2021 budget overview, and the override. He also offered a spreadsheet of budget comparisons with recent years, the school reserve fund status and explained how to access all this information on the website and at the bi-weekly school committee meetings. After some discussion and Q&A with the audience the meeting ended.

V. Correspondence

VI. Future Agenda Items

- A. Foreign Language (1/8/2020)
- B. K-12 Math (1/22/2020)
- C. CASE Update
- D. Superintendent's Report/FundFlow

VII. Calendar

- A. January 8, 2020, regular meeting
- B. January 22, 2020, regular meeting

VIII. Executive Session

N/A

Motion: At 8:15 pm Nicole Altieri motioned to adjourn the regular meeting.
Seconded: Colleen Coogan seconded the motion.
Vote: The motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Liebow
Superintendent of Schools