

FY16 Final School Budget Highlights

By Michael Connelly, Director of Finance and Operations

On Monday, June 1st the town unanimously supported the FY 2016 School Department budget at the annual Town Meeting. The FY16 school department final budget amount is \$27,495,074. This represents a 2.7% increase over FY15. The FY16 budget is driven by many factors and challenges, which led to the need to make staffing and expense adjustments that have resulted in the \$731,059 increase over the FY15 appropriation.

These factors can be summarized by the following:

- Contractual obligations with employees and employee unions
- Staffing adjustments related to strategies detailed in NRPS 2016: Year 5; the district's strategic plan for continuous improvement.
- Staffing to address an increasing enrollment at the high school
- New operational costs associated with the middle school/high school building project

The budget proposal attempts to achieve level services while moving forward with several key initiatives needed to implement a portion of Year 5 of the school district's strategic plan, "NRPS 2016: A Strategy for the Future." The three major strategy areas of NRPS 2016 are: **Technology Integration, Student Services, and Teaching and Learning**. The budget priorities identified below are directly connected to two of the three major strategy areas and are supported by the work of the school administration on the continuous improvement plan.

Technology Integration	Elementary Middle School	1.0 FTE Digital Learning Specialists	\$52,944
		1.0 FTE Library/Media Specialist	\$52,944
Student Services	Middle School	0.5 FTE Reading Teacher	\$26,472
	High School	1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher	\$52,944
	District	0.8 FTE Speech and Language Therapist	\$41,600
Total		4.3 FTE	\$226,904

In Year 5 of the strategic budget vision, the proposal as presented would result in an expenditure of \$226,904 representing an overall increase of approximately .80% to the FY16 budget.

The modified level services budget addresses the increasing enrollment at the high school presently and for the 2015-2016 school year with a request for an additional 3.8 FTE (full-time equivalent) teaching positions beyond the NRPS 2016 requests to protect class sizes and course offerings. These positions are essential and seek to ensure that the high school will continue to be able to offer the same level of course offerings at improved class size/student-teacher ratios. The positions sought in the FY16 budget are listed below.

School	Description	Amount
High School	0.2 FTE Physical Education Teacher	\$10,589
High School	0.2 FTE Health Teacher	\$10,589
High School	0.6 FTE Business / Computer Teacher	\$31,766
High School	1.0 FTE STEM Teacher	\$52,944
High School	0.4 FTE Math Teacher	\$21,178
High School	0.4 FTE Foreign Language Teacher	\$21,178
High School	1.0 FTE Guidance Counselor	\$52,944
Total	3.8 FTE	\$201,188

Enrollment at the high school level is anticipated to increase by a projected 32 or more students all within the next three years as large middle school classes move into the high school. Next year, it is anticipated the high school will have an additional 18 students. Two years ago, in 2013, the high school had 713 students; there are currently 795 students enrolled and the enrollment is expected to rise to as high as 830 students over the next three years. This increase has had a significant impact on class sizes and course offerings, which the staffing increases noted above in the FY16 budget proposal addresses. In addition to the instructional staffing increases, the FY16 budget proposal includes the addition of a 1.0 Guidance Counselor at the high school. Current caseloads of the guidance counselors are 15% higher than recommended levels by the American School Counselors Association. With the additional students at the high school next year and in future years, an additional Guidance Counselor is critical to help bring the high school student-counselor ratio within recommended levels.

There are other enrollment-based budget reductions to the FY16 budget request as well. Due to a projected decline in the number of middle school students, there will be a decrease in the number of staff at the middle school.

Additional costs will be required to operate the new middle school. Additional costs will be necessary to properly operate and maintain the new waste water treatment facility and support a projected increase in utility costs.

Copies of the budget documents are available on the school district's website at http://ps.north-reading.k12.ma.us/pages/NRSDDistrict_Business/budget/index

Many people have worked very hard at discussing student needs, thinking creatively, and making decisions that are sometimes difficult but strive to ultimately preserve the high quality of education in the North Reading Public Schools. We appreciate the communities continued support of public education for the children of our community.