



The Norfolk Boomerang

A Norfolk Tradition since 2005

Volume 5, Number 26 Friday, March 5, 2010

Norfolk, Massachusetts

75¢ / issue \$36.00 yearly / Home Delivery



Swan Pond

Even the pair of swans were hiding for cover from the bitter wind at Bush Pond in Norfolk this past Wednesday afternoon. The water may be half thawed, but the air temperatures recently have been wintry.

Photo by Matt McDonald

Norfolk Going Own Way ... For Now

K-6 School District To Hire An Interim Superintendent for 2010-2011 School Year; Puts Sharing Superintendent With King Philip On Hold

By Matt McDonald

The Norfolk School Committee has backed off the idea of sharing a superintendent with King Philip, and the committee plans to hire an interim superintendent to replace Don LeClerc when he retires June 30.

So is the shared superintendent idea dead?

It hasn't been mortally wounded, but it has been hit by a stun gun.

King Philip officials are planning to move ahead with hiring a new permanent superintendent this spring for the regional grades-7-through-12 school district, and Norfolk's elementary school system is officially not on board.

The Norfolk School Committee made the announcement this past Wednesday night that it wouldn't commit to hiring the new King Philip superintendent starting July 1, during a joint meeting between the two school committees.

But committee members haven't given up the idea, either. The annual town election in May could go a long way toward determining whether the shared-superintendent plan goes forward, since the School Committee figures to get two new members. The committee split 3-2 in favor of the idea in January, and one member from each side (Marie Zullo in favor and Beth Gilbert against) is planning to leave the committee in May.

As supporters originally envisioned it, the plan was supposed to work in phases: King Philip would hire a new superintendent to start this coming July, and then Norfolk would transition toward hiring the same person as superintendent of Norfolk's elementary schools once the contract of the current superintendent, Don LeClerc, ran out June 30, 2011.

Supporters say the two school districts would be able to save enough money to hire an assistant superintendent for curriculum, a position neither school district has currently, and that it would enable school officials to form a more cohesive educational program from kindergarten through 12th grade.

"I think what underlies our discussion ... was the recognition that there is value in articulating and in fact sharing our educational goals and objectives, that because each of the elementary systems feeds into the King Philip system that it

K-6 Budget: Fees Up, Services Down

Norfolk Elementary Schools Would Need Increases in Bus Fee, Other Fees If Budget Increase in 2010-2011 Is Zero, Superintendent Says

By Matt McDonald

Norfolk's elementary superintendent is recommending doubling the current \$90-a-year school bus fee, adding a \$10-a-month music fee, increasing full-day kindergarten fees, and eliminating a school psychologist and professional development stipends for teachers if the elementary schools get no budget increase in the coming school year.

The Norfolk School Committee hasn't voted to formally recommend a budget yet, but Superintendent Don LeClerc presented budget details for the 2010-2011 school year this past Wednesday night.

LeClerc is recommending a so-called "level services" budget that would keep educational offerings about where they are this school year, which would require a 3.56 percent increase over this school year's budget, or about \$350,000.

But selectmen this week said they expect budgets throughout town are unlikely to increase, and they are pressing for department heads to come up with a scenario that allows for 4 percent reductions in their spending from the current fiscal year.

LeClerc said the \$350,000 in reduction to the elementary school expenses would come from the following areas:

1) \$100,000 in federal stimulus money (offsetting an expected loss in so-called "circuit breaker" funds from the state for special education

2) \$20,000 in music fees

"If we instituted a music fee of \$10 per month — which is an outstanding rate given what John Fouracre provides and the talent that he puts out — that would bring in \$20,000. Now again, these figures are a little bit on the low side. If everyone paid, it would be \$25,000. I'll just give this as one example. But we're building in there some students won't

be able to pay. We don't want to not have the opportunities for students who can't afford to pay, or may have multiple children in there, to not work out some type of fee schedule with them, like we do with the buses," LeClerc said during the School Committee meeting this past Wednesday night.

3) \$30,000 from doubling the school bus fee from \$90 per child to \$180 per child

The current \$90-per-child school bus fee (which has certain exceptions) applies to students who live within two miles of the school they attend. (State law requires that school districts provide busing free of charge for students who live more than two miles away from their school.) During the 2008-2009 school year, the bus fee brought in \$32,700, LeClerc said, and during the 2009-2010 school year it has brought in \$32,500.

4) \$19,000 from increasing the full-day kindergarten fee to \$320 a month from \$300 a month now.

That would still be under the \$400-a-month cap set by the state, LeClerc said.

5) \$28,000 in professional development stipends for teachers

6) \$45,000 for eliminating one full-time teacher's position

"You can lose one teacher without affecting the class size as it is right now, just because of the fluctuation in numbers. We're graduating a class of 160, and the kindergarten coming in is 100. So it's no reduction in anything that's there now. It's just those [are] how the numbers play out," LeClerc said.

7) \$84,000 for eliminating one full-time psychological and behavioral therapist

LeClerc said he would add about \$20,000 to the budget to add a half-time guidance counselor position to make up for the loss of the therapist position.

8) \$30,000 for eliminating a special education position that is equivalent to 0.6 of a full-time position

See Budget, page 3

See Superintendent, page 3