

Fees

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\$1.30 per week per child to participate in extra activities.”

Committee Chairman David Christianson Jr. added, “anytime you talk about charging fees, it is not a good situation, but this is a good way for a bad situation to work out. We seem to have two alternatives, this one, or divvying up the costs between activities, then watch them disappear. I feel it’s a good calculated risk.”

Zapantis said the reason for having to charge fees at all is due to the failed override vote. Voters in both towns rejected a second attempt at an override to increase funding for the school district’s operating budget in August and on the list of proposed cuts was 50 percent of the athletic and co-curricular budget, professional development, 32 staff positions and the curriculum renewal cycle budget.

“We want the public to know that this is why we have to do this,” he said. “The override failed and we had a lot of cuts we had to make.”

Zapantis said the menu is fixed for extra curricular activities, and every student can benefit from the clubs and activities the district offers. He said further down the road, if the choices for the elementary level increase, the issue will be re-visited as to if they should also pay fees for participation. He did again stress that it is a one time fee and the activities are unlimited.

“This may increase student participation in activities as they will pay whether or not they think they may want to try something. You get students interested and involved,” Zapantis noted.

The committee voted to adopt the new fees with Zapantis concluding a letter will be sent to all parents explaining the breakdown of charges and what activities are

involved.

Before school started the committee voted to institute a \$100 per participant per activity for students participating in the athletic program and in the marching band. The fee was determined by using 50 percent of the athletic department budget and the fees to cover the costs of coaches stipends, transportation and league fees.

In other business:

- - School Committee members voted to meet with Ashburnham and Westminster selectmen before discussing any warrant articles for the upcoming special town meetings that both towns expect to hold but for which neither town as set a date.

Zapantis told the committee, he had a memo had been received from Paul Boushell, Ashburnham’s interim town administrator telling all departments, boards, and committees that he is requesting that no articles be submitted for the warrant that require funding.

Quoting from the memo, Boushell noted, “as you are all aware, FY08 looms with a great deal of uncertainty at the state level. This does not bode well for our FY09 local aid figures.”

The memo also states all warrant articles are due in his office no later than noon Friday, Sept. 14.

Christianson told members that an extension of the Sept. 14 date has been granted for the school district to submit warrant article requests.

“Where no date has been set for the special town meeting, we were told we could have an extension for any articles,” he said.

Christianson said he would like to have a meeting with the officials of both communities to discuss moving some funds from the operations side of the budget to the capital side on the budget.

“We need additional operating money



The Oakmont Theatre Department, which performed “Hello Dolly” last year, is one of the groups that will be covered by \$60 fee for all high school students to participate in any extra-curricular activities.

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desperately, but we also need some capital plan money. We brought this up last April with Westminster and said we would come back to the table with it after the override vote,” Christianson said.

Christianson explained that capital expenses must be respected, and a discussion with both communities is very important.

“We have a lot of assets here, and they are our responsibility. We have to protect them. We have a plan, and it’s a good plan and we have to let the public know what our plan is,” he said.

Capital expenses include buildings, vehicles, repairs, “stuff you can touch,”

according to Christianson.

Ashburnham and Westminster voters rejected a one-year capital override in June for \$150,000 per town to fund the second year of the five-year capital maintenance and improvement plan.

Committee members agreed to have Zapantis abbreviate the capital list created during the winter from the district five-year capital plan and bring it to the next committee meeting to discuss.

“We have to meet with the selectmen of both towns and go over a shorter list of capital expenses. We can then discuss any special town meeting warrant articles,” he concluded.

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