

Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce
Business Support Meeting Minutes
February 8, 2008

Attendance:

Ed Despres, Chair	Peter Gosline	Pamela Gleeson
Bob Edwards, Vice Chair	Ken Simonetta	Bonnie Kurylo
Peter Brown	Gordon Hale	
Pam Crook	Ray Cote	Guests:
John Vance	Carol Ogilvie	Dr. Richard Bergeron
David Reilly	Joe Hart	Beth Alpaugh-Cote

Call to order and Approval of Minutes

The meeting was called to order by Chair Ed Despres at 7:30AM.

Chair Despres asked if attending members had read the minutes of the January 11, 2008 meeting.

Motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes as presented. Motion passed in the affirmative.

Acknowledgements:

No individual acknowledgements were noted but Ed did acknowledge the NE Patriot's undefeated season and the upcoming Super Bowl.

Sign Committee Update:

Chair Despres reviewed the time line as estimated by the Sign Committee and the funding raised to date. Some additional collection is pending but basically we have reached the goal of \$25,000.00

Guest Speaker:

The guest speaker was Dr. Richard Bergeron, ConVal Superintendent. He was invited to discuss the budget and its rationale, Fact Finders Report, NECAP test score results, and other important school district matters. Members of the Business Support Committee introduced themselves and their business affiliation so Dr. Bergeron could get a sense of membership composition.

Dr. Bergeron provided a copy of the FY 09 ConVal School Board Approved Budget in the amount of \$42,411,821 (gross) budget. He commented on realized cost savings by ending the facilities management contract and the return of students placed out of district.

He commented on health insurance costs, the ever increasing fuel expense and the Capital Improvement Plan. The announcement of a \$2.1M cost savings resulted in a standing ovation at the school meeting. The budget was a bottom up budget (zero-based) and every cost had to be justified. He explained the comprehensive budget review process that occurred and how every cost center was explored for consolidation and efficiency opportunity.

Ray Cote complimented Dr. Bergeron for his budget efforts and being out in the community telling the story. Ray noted the mandatory cost affect of the recent retirement budgeting as now required by the state. Dr. Bergeron noted that Pam Brenner was aware of its pending financial impact and advised many in advance of its future impact. Ray Cote noted he was very concerned about the budget passing without Peterborough's positive vote at the polls.

Dr. Bergeron noted that "fixed costs" equated to 28% of the budget 6 years ago and presently it has reached 50%. 75% of the budget is represented by personnel related expenses.

Chair Despres asked why the medical plan isn't bid as other expense items. Dr. Bergeron said many are concerned with changing the medical package and don't wish to risk the unknown.

Peter Gosline discussed the hospital's "Breakfast with the Legislators" as a very good communication vehicle for airing concerns and hearing their views. This type of forum may be beneficial for school district's use as well.

Dr. Bergeron stated he is out in front of as many groups as possible telling his story. He noted a very positive sit-down with the Ledger-Transcript recently and is writing a column in the paper as well. Passing the budget as approved is key and the default budget is not favored due to further specific additions and reductions.

Ray Cote commented on the Fact Finders Report and how it doesn't address the opportunity to bid health insurance-some receive more in benefits than actual wages. Dr. Bergeron discussed how the Fact Finders Report developed the information contained in the report.

Dr. Bergeron commented on other matters including declining enrollment, projected enrollment and the risks associated with passage of the default budget.

NECAP District/State Comparisons were reviewed (06 vs. 07). The intent of the test is to determine if "adequate progress" is being made in reading, math and writing. The goal is 100% proficient by year 2014. The District remained stable at 73% for 07 and 08. The need is to complete a curriculum change and move to the state standard. Current results are unacceptable according to Dr. Bergeron.

Chair Despres thanked Dr. Bergeron for his presentation. The Committee discussed at great length the possible merits and disadvantages of having the BSC publicly support the approved budget or the recommendation of same to the Chamber Board for its public support. Peter Brown stated that he doesn't live in Peterborough but if he did he'd be inclined to support the budget. However, he cautioned the Committee's public support without hearing a contrary opinion. After much discussion and many opinions, Peter Gosline encouraged the members to educate themselves about the budget and get out and vote.

A motion was made by Peter Gosline, seconded by Ken Simonetta to authorize the Chair to prepare a statement supporting the budget process and encouraging people to vote. Motion passed. It was clear that the Committee did not want to publicly support the budget itself, but rather the process.

Chair Despres encouraged all present to be certain to vote on March 11th!!
He reminded the Committee members that Jack Dugan, President of Monadnock Economic Development Corporation and Peterborough's Business Development Officer would be the speaker at next month's BSC on March 14th for a Town of Peterborough Update.

A motion was made, seconded and voted in the affirmative to adjourn the meeting at 9:11AM. Go Patriots!!

Respectfully,

Bob Edwards
Vice Chair and Secretary Pro-Tem