

## **Open Letter to the Sudbury School Committee June 8, 2017**

Dear Members,

We are writing with regards to your May 17, 2017 vote to raise the rent paid by Sudbury Extended Day (SED) to use school buildings to provide before and after school care for children attending the Sudbury Public Schools (SPS).

This vote has raised the very real possibility that SED will not be able to operate its program next year despite our willingness to pay a higher rent. This situation is creating real anxiety for Sudbury families, who do not know who will be taking care of their children before and after school next year, nor when this uncertainty will be resolved.

The May vote increased SED's rent from its current value of \$31,500 to \$60,000 in fiscal year 2018 (FY18) and over \$90,000 by FY22. While the higher rent will necessitate a tuition increase for our families, we recognize the need for SED to provide fair compensation for the use of SPS buildings and understand that the market analysis commissioned by the Committee recommended a higher rent.

However, the rent increase has set in motion a legal process that will take some time to complete. As the new rent is in excess of \$35,000, SPS is required to issue a public call for bids to offer a before and after school childcare program within SPS facilities. The anticipated schedule for this process would allow bids to be submitted until July 17, 2017 and then require the SPS administration to select a winner and seek the Committee's approval of the choice. The Committee is currently scheduled to meet twice during the summer, on July 19 and August 30. Thus at best, parents will learn what organization will be providing childcare in the SPS facilities only six weeks before school starts, and the announcement could come later.

We believe that this is an unfair and untenable situation for the families of the over 600 SPS children who are enrolled in SED, many of whom signed contracts and paid deposits for next year before the May 17 vote even occurred. This situation is also unfair to SED's 70 teachers and staff, some of whom have taken care of our children for decades and now face the possibility of layoffs if SED's bid is not selected. In addition, the current process may not result in the best lease agreement for SPS or the extended care provider, as time pressure makes it difficult to carefully consider all the important details of the lease.

We think that it is very likely that the School Committee was unaware of this required legal process and its harmful impact on Sudbury families, given that there was no discussion of it at your meeting prior to the vote. Now that we have brought this information to your attention, we hope that you will agree that there is an urgent need to act to mitigate this harm.

We urge the School Committee to consider an alternative: raise SED's rent to just below the legal trigger for FY18 and conduct the bidding process next year, with a start date for the

winning bid as July 1, 2018. If SED is not the winner at that time, our Board of Directors, families and staff will have adequate time to consider their options. In fact, this suggestion is not inconsistent with the School Committee's vote of May 17th, which specified a rent of \$60,000 in "year 1" but did not indicate that year 1 would be FY18.

SED is proud of our record of providing high-quality, convenient, and affordable child care for thousands of Sudbury families over the past 33 years. Founded by the League of Women Voters of Sudbury in the early 1980s, we are a non-profit organization led by Sudbury parents. We hear from our families every day how critical our services are to their ability to live in our town.

We also support the Sudbury community and SPS in many ways, including by providing tuition scholarships for low-income families, college scholarships for LS graduates, and funds for the purchase and repair of items in SPS buildings. We have always considered ourselves to be a partner to SPS and have tried to be flexible and creative in working with SPS to support the students that we share. While we are distressed by some aspects of how the process of establishing a new rental agreement have unfolded, we remain deeply committed to our mission and hope to continue to work in partnership with SPS to support Sudbury families for many years to come.

Respectfully,

Courtney Coile  
President of the Board, Sudbury Extended Day

Suzie Kornblum  
Director, Sudbury Extended Day