

Dear Plymptonians:

The Silver Lake Regional School District's budget accounts for about $\frac{1}{4}$ of our Town's annual operating budget (23% in FY12). Most residents only see that one number in the annual warrant. The District does supply a more detailed, 32-page budget to the Finance Committee (and I guess, to anyone that might ask for it). That budget is, in my opinion, very hard to understand and analyze. In an effort to make the District's budget more readily understood I have rearranged it into two pages. I have retained all the details of the longer version. The first page of this version shows the breakdown of each of 24 categories as they pertain to the Middle, High and Vocational schools. The second page has similar breakdowns for Administration and Special Education.

Why have I done this? In the past, there have been debates over the size of the Regional School District Budget that, if I may simplify it, break down into – “The schools spend too much money!” and “No they don't. We need this for our kids!” – and more. Sometimes our discussions are heated, emotional and divisive. Any yet, most of us only know the total amount being requested, not how it's being used. How can we be sure it's “too much” or “needed”? I believe that the bulk of this budget can probably be agreed on as necessary (indeed, some level of it is State-mandated). With a better understanding of what makes up the budget, I'm hoping that we can have more targeted and rational discussions about the amount we're asked to vote on.

Attached is the current year's Regional School District budget (FY12). When the School Committee adopts their FY13 budget to be voted on at our May Town Meeting, I will post that also. I do not claim that this 2-page presentation of the budget is the best way to do show it. It's just the best way that I could come up with. I hope that you will look it over and use it in the spirit in which I've produced it.

Barry