

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

BUDGET WORKSHOP

Wednesday, January 22, 2020

6:00 p.m.

Manchester High School – Room 293

PRESENT: Gundersen, Heinrich, Hughes, Meggers, Pattacini, Patterson, Scappaticci, Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent & Special Services Radikas, Director of Finance & Management Clancy

ABSENT: Stefanovicz

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:09 p.m. by Darryl Thames, Snr., co-chair of the Personnel & Finance Committee.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Thames.

C. SUPERINTENDENT'S BUDGET PRESENTATION

Mr. Geary reviewed that he presented the budget at the last Board meeting and due to the last budget workshop being cancelled, this evening he will discuss purchased services. At the next Board meeting during the Superintendent's Report he will tackle another section of the budget and the last budget workshop set for next Wednesday will finalize any questions. The Board of Education proposed budget for the 2020/2021 School Year is \$121,017,593. This is an increase of \$4,486,356 over the current year's budget, which represents a 3.85% increase. However, with the increase in ECS money of \$1,200,000, the actual budget increase is \$3,286,356, which represents a 2.82% increase.

Mr. Geary reviewed the purchased services budget lines in depth. Many items have been split among several lines this year in an effort to better differentiate actual costs. The full budget proposal is available online.

Mr. Pattacini thanked Mr. Geary and Ms. Clancy for their hard work and noted he felt this budget proposal show unprecedented transparency and detail. Mr. Pattacini asked for clarity around the consultants and wellness lines. Mr. Geary explained we are cutting back on external consultants where we can. However,

if a family requests a special education evaluation be done by an outside evaluator they are granted that request.

In contracted services there has been a drop in the budget request of 36%. Mr. Pattacini wondered why. Mr. Geary explained that that was one of the lines where several items were simply moved to other budget lines and overall those services remained about flat.

Mr. Pattacini asked about the decrease of 21% in transportation for field trips and athletics. Mr. Geary noted that 0.1% of the overall budget supports field trips, but that is split between this transportation line and the dues and fees line. These lines are sometimes lower than expected due to grant funding around field trips.

Regarding homeless transportation, Mr. Pattacini asked about the 47% increase. Mr. Geary noted that this is a difficult line to predict and they look at the last five years to determine a figure. We are mandated to provide transportation for children whose families lived in Manchester when they became homeless and this provides the children with a sense of stability in a time of upheaval. The number of students that require this transportation varies and sometimes the situation may be temporary, such as in the case of a flood where the family relocates to a hotel for a short period during renovations.

Mr. Pattacini noted that the bus contract rate has risen 3% but the budget line shows a 6% increase and he wondered why. Mr. Geary noted that every effort is being made to charge the correct budget lines for specific transportation and that accounts for the difference in this proposal.

Ms. Patterson asked about special transportation directly related to special education students. Mr. Geary noted that Dattco provides about \$1 million in transportation in and outside the district, Access accounts for about \$1 million in special education, medical and homeless transportation, Haven also does that same types of transportation for about \$50,000 and CCGC has started to provide transportation at a cost of about \$62,000. Mr. Geary will get more details for next time.

Ms. Patterson asked about the 15% increase in the communications line, wondering if this was for walkie talkies only or if it included cell phones too. Mr. Geary reviewed the costs of walkie talkie replacements and repairs and will get a list of who has walkie talkies by school. He also noted there are 103 cell phones in the district used by administrators, some adult education case managers, Central Office staff and on-call IT staff.

Ms. Patterson asked why Martin is labeled a HOT School and if there are equitable programs in other schools. Mr. Geary explained that Martin has been a HOT (High Order Thinking through Arts) School for many, many years through a grant that the Board matches. We do not have similar programs in other schools and he anticipates allowing this program until the building closes.

Mr. Pattacini noted the actual requested increase in the budget this year is 2.8% due to the ECS funding. Mr. Geary agreed, noting that last year we did not know the exact amount during budget season, but eventually our budget was reduced by an equal amount. This is year 2 in the state budget, so that is why we already know the amount expected. Mr. Geary talked about Alliance Grant funding and rules, noting that grant was originally thought to be five years, but now is included in the ECS amount mostly.

Mr. Thames asked about the apartment rental. Mr. Geary explained that the transition program, which is for students ages 18-21 with significant disabilities, helps students in three ways: day to day academics, job placements, and daily living skills. Nobody lives in the apartment, it is a mock setup to teach these students how to live on their own one day.

Mr. Thames remembered last year talking about outplacement tuition for students and wondered if we are at about the same numbers this year. Mr. Geary noted we are actually over budget this year by about \$950,000, so he used that higher number for next year's budget.

Mr. Thames asked about the Illing Washington D.C. trip and how we are identifying the students who would have difficulty paying for that trip and helping them. Mr. Geary noted that about 200 of the 400 students in grade 8 attend the trip and students are encouraged to apply for aid if they need it. Not all students want to attend the trip and not all parents will allow it. Mr. Geary is considering doing away with that trip in the future.

Mr. Geary noted that Monday at the regular Board meeting he will discuss salaries and benefits. He provided handouts regarding that this evening and if Board members have any questions about any topics discussed this evening, or anything specific to salary and benefits, to email those questions so answers may be prepared for next week.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None.

E. CLOSING COMMENTS

Mr. Thames thanked the Superintendent for his detailed presentation and in-depth knowledge. He invited the public to come to the next Board meeting and budget workshop and ask questions.

G. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 p.m. by Mr. Thames.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary