

**MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**BUDGET WORKSHOP**

**Thursday, January 28, 2021**

6:00 p.m.

Lincoln Center/Virtual

**PRESENT:** Gundersen, Heinrich, Luna, Meggers, Pattacini, Patterson, Stefanovicz, Thames

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

**ABSENT:** Hughes

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Darryl Thames, Snr., co-chair of the Personnel & Finance Committee. This is the second budget workshop.

**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 questions sent from the previous Budget Workshop. The budget proposal includes current services as well as the 15 additional teachers hired during COVID. Mr. Geary showed how the increases in certain line items would be covered under the Alliance Grant and ultimately the increase in budget after Alliance funding would fall to about 1.3% (\$1,572,981).

With the expected savings of approximately \$1,050,000 from this year's budget, the Board of Education will request the Town to create a set aside account not to exceed 1% of the budget. That can then offset the proposed budget.

Mr. Geary is also expecting more retirement announcements as the deadline for notice of retirement is next Monday. Next week he will more accurately know the proposed salary line and that may result in a 0% budget increase ultimately.

Mr. Geary also noted that we have no new information regarding the Federal stimulus funding, which is expected to help with recovery over the summer, with a robust summer program.

The next question centered around pensions. Mr. Geary reviewed that all new hires have a defined contribution, not a pension. Previously the administration tried to backdate that five years and move all hires during that time period to a defined contribution, but it was a non-starter with the unions.

**Mr. Gundersen** asked for clarity around the numbers and Mr. Geary explained that there are 1,295 people in the Town of Manchester that have a defined benefit upon retirement (a pension) and of those 264 are members of the Board of Education. Each year that number will drop until all are covered under the defined contribution.

Mr. Gundersen also asked for clarity on the salary increase. Mr. Geary reviewed that pending the Federal Stimulus package and the Alliance funding, an appropriate number of positions will be moved to other lines and flexibility is key. The cost of the 15 additional staff, including benefits, is approximately \$900,000.

Mr. Gundersen asked about the increase to the capital project line. Mr. Geary explained that follows Board policy, which is 0.6% of the previous year's budget. In the past the community made it clear they want our buildings maintained adequately. Last year we had unexpected state funding that allowed us to reduce that line.

**Mr. Pattacini** noted that even though we added 15 staff members this year, we still saved about \$1million. Mr. Geary noted we moved about \$1million in salary to the Alliance Grant (library media specialists) and we continue to move items to Alliance.

Mr. Pattacini asked if it was possible, if "all the stars aligned" to request a 0% increase in budget if there were enough retirements. Mr. Geary suggested approving a budget increase of 1.3% plus requesting the 1% set aside fund with our savings from this year. The Board of Directors will then more than likely reduce the budget. We are still awaiting the Federal dollars and still unsure of how the spring and summer will unfold. Mr. Pattacini asked about the minimum budget requirement and Mr. Geary noted that the Town cannot budget less than the current year budget for the Board of Education. This is to ensure that struggling districts that receive Alliance funding are not underfunded by their towns and Alliance funds are used appropriately.

**Mr. Geary** then reviewed the purchased professional services, contracted services and other purchased services line.

Next year is the last year of our bus contract. Mr. Geary expects to find more efficiencies in the 2022-2023 transportation budget. The budget line for transportation for next year was based on the 19-20 school year.

Mr. Geary also reviewed the MBR (Minimum Budget Requirements) in more detail. As an Alliance District we are not eligible for an exception to the MBR and the Town would incur a penalty if they underfund our budget. For every dollar below our current budget the town would lose ECS funds by double that.

**Mr. Thames** feels it is important to keep the additional 15 teachers and is concerned with the loss of learning. He wondered how efficiently we can use those extra teachers. Mr. Geary explained that they will be used to mitigate class sizes in grades K, 1 and 2, where foundational skills are needed. He is optimistic that we will have a robust summer program, bigger than in past years, for anyone that wants to attend, not just those struggling. He will review this plan in greater detail at the February 8th Board meeting. He hopes for two 3-week summer sessions, with a week break between, as it is important to have some downtime. The program would be for all students K-12 that wish to participate. This will provide not only educational opportunities but recreational activities as well as some employment opportunities for the high school students. Federal funds will be used for this program which will be the start of our three year Recovery plan. There is a possibility that we may be able to do some spring Saturday programming, but with COVID we are not yet sure. Mr. Thames was pleased to hear that the socialization aspect is being considered.

**Mr. Geary** told Board members that if any would prefer paper copies of the budget to let him know and if there are any lingering questions from tonight's presentation to email him so he may prepare responses. Next Thursday is the last budget workshop and the budget needs to be approved at the February 8th Board meeting.

#### **D. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

#### **E. CLOSING COMMENTS**

**Mr. Meggers** wondered when the Town will convene to discuss our budget. Ms. Clancy has not been given those dates yet and she will look into it, but usually that happens the first week of March.

#### **F. ADJOURNMENT**

**The meeting was adjourned at 6:54 p.m. by Mr. Thames.**

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Pattacini  
Board Secretary

