

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

BUDGET WORKSHOP

Wednesday, February 4, 2015

6:00 p.m.

Manchester High School – Room 293

PRESENT: Crockett, Cruz, Leon, Pattacini, Pazda, Scappaticci, Stafford

ALSO PRESENT: Interim Superintendent of Schools Geary, Assistant to the Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Matfess, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Radikas

ABSENT: Hagenow, Thames

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:07 p.m. by Michael Crockett, who reminded us that this is a meeting of the Personnel & Finance Committee held in workshop format.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

C. OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Pattacini explained that this is the last budget workshop and Board members would be asking any final questions they had. A discussion about adopting the budget would be next.

D. SUPERINTENDENT’S BUDGET PRESENTATION

Mr. Geary wanted to clarify the slide on Student Profile. He noted the slide states that there are 524 students at magnet schools. In reality, there are 964 Manchester students attending magnet schools. However, we only have to pay tuition to CREC magnets, not those run by Hartford Public Schools, so this slide was only referring to the students that had a fiscal impact on the budget.

Mr. Pattacini asked about oil costs, and wondering if these figures were from town assumptions regarding oil prices. Mr. Geary stated the town does give us those figures. Mrs. Brooks stated Mr. Wolverton provides the estimates. Right now the fuel diesel contract ends June 30, 2015 and the prices are \$2.66 and \$2.68 a gallon. Next year’s projections are \$3.00 a gallon. The gas contract has expired and the current market rate is \$2.58. For next year the projected rate is

\$2.95 a gallon. The National Gas cost is \$1.35. The Trans Canada per kilowatt cost is 0.0797 with a 4% increase in CL&P transmission rates.

Mr. Pattacini wondered if there were any more opportunities for shared services with the town. Mr. Geary reviewed we do share services regarding the Munis management system already. Some limited IT support is also shared, though we do most of our own IT support in-house. We pay the town \$280,000 for shared services and we will look closer at that number. One other collaboration we participate in is regarding the SAAM program, partnering with Parks & Rec. It was outlined that partnering with them was much more cost effective than trying to run that program totally through the Board of Education, as was done the first year. We will also see more work through the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Family Engagement Grant.

Mr. Pattacini asked about the salaries slide, noting a significant reduction in hourly employees and tutor lines. Mr. Geary reviewed that some positions where an employee retired or left were not filled in the same way, and some of those positions were absorbed by adding certified staff positions. Mr. Pattacini was encouraged by the administrations work to ensure we are spending our money wisely.

Mr. Pattacini noted there was substantial savings noted in medical insurance and wondered why, as there was a 4% increase in cost. Mr. Geary reviewed there was an increased cost share with recent contracts being completed. He also noted that 22 employees had dropped insurance and 14 employees went from a family plan to a single plan. Mrs. Brooks added that some of the people that left the insurance plan were retirees and noted that the State has a more cost effective plan available. Other employees may have opted to compare plans with their spouse and switch to their spouse's insurance.

Mr. Pattacini asked about the decrease in administrator salaries. Mr. Geary explained that 0.5 administrator for technology will be funded through the Alliance Grant and also noted that some of the new administrators may only be Step 1 instead of Step 5, resulting in a lower salary.

Mr. Pattacini asked about the science staff covered in the Alliance Grant. He noted there will be 18 specialists in the elementary schools and wondered what that would look like. Mr. Geary reviewed that teachers need to focus on math and ELA and the solution was to bring in two science specialists (one for grades K-2 and one for grades 3-5) in each elementary school. These specialists will not be involved with Bennet and we need to start thinking of Bennet as a secondary school, not an elementary school.

Mr. Leon wondered when open enrollment for health benefits is. Mrs. Brooks stated that is in April/May for the July 1st through June 30th time period.

Mr. Leon noted that CREC advertises and sells itself with good publicity. He noted that if we were able to somehow retain only 3% of the approximate 1000 students currently attending a magnet, the savings that would be realized would fund the cost of any efforts expended in the marketing. Mr. Geary agreed we do want to retain more students and could do a better job finding out why students leave and addressing this issue. He feels we will begin to see improved programming and we need to tell that story.

Ms. Pazda thanked the Superintendent for a comprehensive budget report. She asked for an explanation of the different magnet schools types and tuition. Mr. Geary reviewed we pay tuition to all magnet schools except Hartford Public School magnets. Mrs. Brooks reviewed that we pay CREC magnets, but not Hartford Public because the Hartford Public schools get more funding from the government, so they are not allowed to charge tuition.

Ms. Pazda feels if we change the perception and get the message out, parents may start to see the value of staying here. Regarding staffing, she applauds hiring the most highly qualified individuals.

Ms. Pazda looked at the Purchased Professional Services slide and the increase in Professional Development by 60% and the increase in the Kelly Subs line, wondering if they were aligned. Mr. Geary stated there is a need for significant Math and ELA professional development. In this budget Social Studies and Science are also addressed, which have been previously ignored. As for the increase in Kelly subs, part of the increased cost is related to the need to have professional development, but more so because the Board recently approved an increase in the sub rate to \$87.50 to remain competitive and the contract with Delta-T falls under that line, regarding paraprofessional subs.

Ms. Pazda asked about instructional supplies and the decrease in the budget line for library books and periodicals. Mr. Geary noted the roll of the library media specialists is being clarified. They will be supporting teachers more in the classroom with digital learning. He also noted that we have to evaluate the resources we have before continuing to add more.

Ms. Pazda noted she is looking forward to inquiry based zest. Mr. Geary added that a benefit of having Science specialists is that it frees up teachers for collaborative work.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

F. CLOSING COMMENTS

Mr. Leon asked Mrs. Brooks when the budget needed to be approved by. Mrs. Brooks stated she needs to give the figure to the town by February 14th. Mr. Leon wondered what the plan would be if the Board meeting Monday is snowed out. We would need to call a special meeting to approve the budget in time.

Mr. Pattacini asked for an informal vote and all members present stated they would be supporting the budget.

G. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Crockett adjourned the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Board Secretary