

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

BUDGET WORKSHOP

Wednesday, January 18, 2017

6:00 p.m.

Manchester High School – Room 293

PRESENT: Caldwell, Conyers, Hagenow, Jacobsen, Leon, Pattacini, Scappaticci, Stefanovicz

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

ABSENT: Thames

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Neal Leon, co-chair of the Personnel & Finance Committee, 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. Leon.

C. OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Leon recommended that if Board members are suggesting items to add or remove from the budget, they should also suggest how to fund those items or justify cuts.

Ms. Hagenow, co-chair of the Committee, noted that due to the crisis in the state she was sure we would need to make cuts down the line.

D. SUPERINTENDENT'S BUDGET PRESENTATION

Mr. Geary had previously presented his recommended budget of \$114,110,227, which represents a 2.9% increase over the current year's budget of \$110,897,460. This increase does not include any new services, but is mostly comprised of salaries, medical insurance and contractual obligations. This evening Mr. Geary reviewed questions that had been sent to him previously.

Regarding increases to salaries, Mr. Geary reviewed the budget calls for an increase of 2.8% for certified staff, while their contract actually has a 3.1% increase next year. The difference is due to some retirements and the fact that

new hires generally come in at a lower pay scale. As for administrators, the budget calls for a 2.8% increase while their contract has a 3.2% increase. The difference is due to staff movement.

Mr. Geary explained the shared services with the town. We reimburse the town approximately \$88,000 for field maintenance. For school resource officers we pay half of their salaries, amounting to about \$240,000. The Early Childhood Specialist salary is split with the town and our portion is about \$43,000. We reimburse the town for street lights at about \$10,000, Channel 16 access at about \$12,500 and MSP. For information systems we pay the town about \$197,000, though about \$140,000 of that comes from eRate funding and the net cost to the budget is about \$50,000. For Munis we are charged about \$47,000.

Mr. Pattacini wondered if there are any changes to shared services we should anticipate due to the new field. Mr. Geary does not think there will be a reduction in staffing due to the field maintenance. He will look into the information systems costs.

Ms. Jacobsen wondered how many SRO's we have and where they are located. Mr. Geary explained there are two officers at MHS, one splits time between Bentley and MRA, and another is at Illing. There is also a supervisor that is at MHS. Our cost is about \$240,000 for these officers.

Mr. Geary stated there were questions about what was being cut. He noted we reduced consultants, reduced costs in instructional supplies and contracted services. He noted we tightened as much as possible.

As for the food services program, the full director's salary was moved to this budget so there was no net change. Several items throughout the budget were moved from one line to another, making it look like one line went up and one went down, but overall there is no real change to the numbers. Another example of this was Curriculum & Instruction going down due to the field trip monies being moved to Other Purchased Services.

The ELL line is a bit lower due to a retirement and replacement at a lower salary. Another change is a Business Ed teacher who changed departments to English One Vo-Ag teacher moved to World Language to accommodate the extra need there.

One item that needs to be moved is summer transportation for special education students. This approximate \$25,000 cost needs to be moved to the Special Education Summer Programming line instead of transportation line.

Guidance costs are up significantly because in some schools social workers have been hired in place of psychologists as it is often difficult to fill those positions.

Mr. Geary explained that the 76% drop to Contracted Services was balanced by a 1118% increase to Other Purchased Services, for a net drop of about \$57,000. This is simply due to moving items to different categories.

Ms. Hagenow wondered if overtime is pre-approved. She realizes that snow removal and summer cleaning are hard to budget, but wondered about other OT. Mr. Geary explained that some overtime is expected, such as when a secretary has to stay late because a child wasn't picked up, or with the Waddell move. He also explained that some overtime is due to security guards at the high school working during the day and then working for Adult Ed at night. Due to the fact that these guards work over 40 hours, they automatically receive overtime. However, Mr. Geary feels this cost is justified due to the people and the extra level of security they provide by knowing the school and the students. Hiring different guards for evening may save a few dollars, but would not be worth it in the end.

Ms. Hagenow wondered when the transportation contract is up. Mr. Geary noted we are in year 5 of a 5 year contract. Ms. Clancy noted the contract ends June 2017. She further explained that we are currently collaborating with Ellington, Vernon and Somers and CREC is developing an RFP. The attorneys will review it and then there will be a mandatory pre-bid meeting. Hopefully by being part of a 4 town collaborative we will get better pricing.

Ms. Jacobsen asked about us paying for the gasoline for our buses. Mr. Geary explained that is part of the contract and it is actually cheaper for us to pay for the diesel, which we contract for each year, than to pay a higher rate for the buses.

Ms. Jacobsen wondered how transportation was budgeted for since we do not know what the contract will be. Ms. Clancy noted that CREC had recommended a 5% increase. She notes we hope to increase our efficiency as well.

Mr. Leon recalled that there are a limited number of qualified transportation providers. He wondered if the Cheney/Bennet Waddell relocation will cost more for transportation. Mr. Geary noted that most of Waddell is currently walkers and they would all require transportation. The impact would be less when Verplanck moves to Robertson, as many of the Verplanck students already are bussed.

Mr. Leon asked about the World Language program. Mr. Geary reviewed that

two years ago we added 2 Chinese teachers, 1.5 at Illing and 0.5 at MHS. We split their salary with the college. Also a tech ed teacher was moved to World Language for next year to accommodate the increased need. Mr. Leon wanted to be sure that students who started Mandarin at Illing would be able to continue their studies at MHS. Mr. Geary assured him they would have that opportunity.

Mr. Geary explained that Inter-scholastic insurance was moved to the Other Purchased Services line.

The telephone line dropped because last year we replaced radios throughout the district that was a one time cost.

Athletic supplies cost is up a bit due to the need for new football helmets.

Medical supplies rose a bit due to the need to replace audiometers, which is a one time expense.

Budget figures for the last several years (rounded):

12/13 = \$100,646,000

13/14 = \$104,535,000 (a 3.86% increase)

14/15 = \$106,500,000 (a 1.89% increase)

15/16 = \$109,147,000 (a 2.48% increase)

16/17 = \$110,897,000 (a 1.68% increase)

Mr. Geary touched on the vehicle replacement costs. He noted that the request for this line was \$270,000, which he cut back to \$170,000. Several vehicles are due for replacement but each year we wind up postponing many of these, which leads to higher maintenance costs. Some of the current vehicles were scheduled to be replaced as early as 2012.

Mr. Geary noted the last energy efficiency study was conducted in 2007/2008 prior to many of the renovations that have taken place in recent years. He noted that many items funded by the Alliance Building Grant included energy efficient changes.

Regarding questions on health insurance, Steve May will be at the next Budget Workshop next week to answer those questions.

Mr. Geary detailed the responsibilities of the substance abuse counselors. There are two counselors, which are paid by the Alliance Grant currently. They work at MHS, Bentley and MRA. They run small group and individual counseling. They also provide an opportunity for students to lessen their consequences if they attend counseling.

The number of staff per building was questioned. Mr. Geary explained that the Hartford Foundation is currently conducting a staff audit and they are nearly done. That information will be made available in the future.

Sped tuition is comprised of placement costs plus any special services the student needs, such as a para or counseling. Transportation is not included in this line. The costs are about \$386 per day or \$74,000 a year per student. Some may go up to as high as \$160,000 a year, depending on placement. Currently about 55 students are outplaced.

Mr. Geary was asked what the contingency plan would be if the Alliance Grant is pulled. He noted we would need to ask the town for more funding.

A question about the current budget and salaries was asked. Mr. Geary reviewed that currently we are over budget on administrator salary due to a medical leave and substitute coverage. In regards to certified salaries the degree changes line covers those increases. For hourly employees and paras we are in good shape and funds have been encumbered to carry us through the end of the year.

Employees in the district receive life insurance of between \$10,000 and \$200,000, depending on their bargaining unit.

Regarding the reduction in the art supplies line, there is surplus inventory and teachers are being asked to cut back and be thoughtful about needs.

The Travel/Lodging line in Language Arts increased due to a teachers college PD at Columbia.

Mr. Geary noted that we have about \$260,000 encumbered for network switches and chromebook purchases that we hope to make this year, but we are holding off for now. Chromebooks cost just under \$200 each.

In regards to magnet schools, we pay tuition to all non-Hartford Public magnets. Tuition costs have gone up about \$100 to 150 per student at most magnets.

Mr. Leon pointed out that there is no limit to what magnet schools can charge. Mr. Geary agreed and noted that though we currently do not have to pay for Hartford Public magnets, that may change in the future.

Ms. Jacobsen wanted to know if we planned better for salaries for next year since we went over this year. Mr. Geary reminded her of the unforeseen illness

causing the issue this year and noted that we plan the best we can.

Ms. Jacobsen wondered what impact the renovation and consolidation of schools would have on the budget. Mr. Geary noted we would see that impact once Robertson closes and Washington closes. Next year there would not be much impact.

Mr. Pattacini asked about magnet schools and the number of students. There are 1158 students at magnets this year with 529 of them attending tuition magnets. This number has remained about the same each year. Mr. Pattacini noted that the magnet tuition rose about 7.1%. Mr. Geary agreed, noting they could have raised it even more. Ms. Clancy added that even though we do not pay for tuition for students at Hartford Public magnets, we are responsible for any services required by special education students attending there.

Mr. Pattacini was glad to hear of the grants coming in and that the Hartford Foundation is working to help create efficiencies in staffing. He feels a 2.9% budget increase is reasonable. He wondered if we had any additional guidance regarding funding from the state lately. Mr. Geary noted that the Hartford Foundation is funding that efficiency study themselves. He had received no additional guidance from the state on what to expect.

Mr. Geary noted that we are not yet at the point of seeking concessions from bargaining units. Generally that is done in order to save jobs and we are not there yet.

Mr. Geary noted that just prior to this meeting he was told the Alliance Capital Improvement grant had issued an RFP for next year. He didn't understand how there would be funding for this, but if it does come through it would impact our capital improvements and repairs line.

Ms. Jacobsen wondered where we could cut if we have to. Mr. Geary noted we are very close to having staff reductions. If the Alliance Capital Improvements grant does come through, we could make cuts to the capital improvement and repairs line.

Ms. Jacobsen wondered if we should conduct another energy audit to become more efficient. She noted she had recently seen lights on all night at HPS. Mr. Geary noted that the entire energy budget is about \$1.4 million, so even if we could cut that by some percentage, it would not be much. Mr. Leon pointed out those types of studies cost money and the return on investment takes years. In the past it was decided we would address this issue building by building during renovations.

Mr. Leon noted even though he is not a proponent of magnet schools, we have planned our schools and renovations based on the fact that about 1000 students attend magnets each year. If those students were to suddenly all return there would be an issue with space in town.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

F. CLOSING COMMENTS

Mr. Leon asked that if Board members had further questions that they would like addressed next week to email Mr. Geary. The Health Insurance consultant will be present at next Wednesday's meeting. Mr. Leon thanked Director Jones for sitting in on the meeting this evening.

G. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Board Secretary