

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

BUDGET WORKSHOP

Wednesday, May 24, 2017

6:00 p.m.

Bennet Academy Library

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

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

ABSENT: Hagenow

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 p.m. by Neal Leon, 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. Leon.

C. OPENING REMARKS

None.

D. SUPERINTENDENT'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATION

Mr. Geary reviewed we would prefer to have no cuts to the budget. However, given the approved budget from the Board of Directors, we have to make cuts. There will be no additional categories cut, other than those reviewed at the last workshop.

Mr. Geary reviewed additional recommendations. He noted we could cut three custodial/maintenance workers to save \$150,000. The people in these positions are retiring.

The early retirement incentive for teachers could net the Board \$200,000. The incentive is \$20,000 paid over two years and that could be cash or deposited tax-free into a health savings account.

Regarding the \$500,000 we froze this year, there is uncertainty around the state's contribution to the ECS funding that comes to the town. The money does not come directly to the schools. Mr. Geary feels if we keep the \$500,000 we promised to the town and then have to ask for the ECS funding that might be an issue.

Mr. Thames asked for clarity on the early retirement incentive. Mr. Geary reviewed the exact savings would be unknown based on who took the officer, how many sick days they have banked, and their exact salary and replacement salary.

Mr. Thames asked about the ECS funds going to the town. Mr. Geary explained that while the Alliance Funds have come directly to the school, the ECS funding goes through the town. They do not have to give us all those funds.

Mr. Conyers asked about the behavior classrooms being suggested and it was noted they are for the elementary level. He also asked for a percentage of coaches being cut and it was determined to be a $\frac{2}{3}$ cut.

Mr. Pattacini asked Mr. Geary's opinion on the proposed vs revised cuts. Mr. Geary feels we cannot cut more than \$50,000 from capital repairs nor more than \$200,000-225,000 from technology. The funding from Alliance Capital Improvements can only be spent on specific items, not emergency repairs.

Mr. Pattacini noted the Board would need to take action to rescind Policy 3510 and the Technology policy for this year with these cuts.

Mr. Pattacini asked for the total number of custodial/maintenance personnel. Ms. Clancy noted we have 68 custodians and 23 maintenance workers.

Mr. Pattacini noted that we will still be short if we add the desired behavioral support. Mr. Geary noted the first goal is to achieve the \$2.4 million reduction. Then we will figure out how to support behavior, noting it costs more to outplace students.

Mr. Pattacini asked about magnet tuitions and the anticipated increase. Mr. Geary noted historically increases have ranged from \$250-500 per student. However, we are aware their funding is also being decreased so there is concern there.

Mr. Pattacini asked about the process to offer early retirement incentives. Mr. Geary noted we would hold a special meeting of the Board of Education to take action as soon as possible on both this and the bus issue. He needs to know if Board members are comfortable with the idea before reaching out to the MEA.

Regarding the \$500,000, Mr. Pattacini initially was inclined to keep the money given all the uncertainty in the future funding, but he is now leaning towards Mr. Geary's recommendation to stick with the plan to turn the funds over to the town.

Ms. Stefanovicz noted that we would still be about \$80,000 short to add the behavioral classrooms and staff. She wondered if we could save money by returning some children currently outplaced into those classrooms. Mr. Geary noted that is possible.

Ms. Stefanovicz wondered who the non-affiliated staff are. Mr. Geary noted they are any staff not in a union and some of those include behavior techs, security guards, Occupational Therapists, HR, payroll, and the facilities director.

Ms. Stefanovicz wondered if the teachers or paras union was asked to forego or reduce raises as well as the administrators. Mr. Geary noted the current contract for the paras already included no raise this year.

Mr. Caldwell wondered about the number of teachers that would be eligible for early retirement. Ms. Clancy noted that number is about 65, and is based on years of service both in our district and others.

Mr. Leon wondered if the town is obligated to turn over ECS funding to the Board of Education as it is earmarked for education. Mr. Geary noted it is for educational funding, but they could say it was a reimbursement of their portion of our funding. Mr. Leon wondered if any Alliance Funding might be available for the behavior specialists. Mr. Geary noted if we receive the money anticipated from Alliance we would have about \$500,000 available.

Mr. Leon touched on the potential reduction of coaches. He noted they would be able to bump into other positions. Mr. Geary confirmed, some would post into vacant positions and others likely into teaching positions.

Mr. Leon cautions against cutting more from technology as we look to next year's budget we will need even more money. He wonders if we could keep maybe \$250,000 of the \$500,000 we froze this year. Mr. Geary also pointed out that we can no longer bond for laptops as part of projects, so that needs to be kept in mind.

Mr. Leon noted that we received \$500,000 less from the Alliance Grant this past year than anticipated, and we froze \$500,000 for the town. In his opinion we are in a worse place than the town because they will just put the funds into reserve, while we would fund actual line items.

Mr. Pattacini wondered what the figure would be in the technology line to not affect the technology policy. Mr. Geary noted it is a percentage (0.3%) of the total budget.

Mr. Geary also noted that we have to consider the bus contract may wind up being higher than budgeted as well.

Ms. Stefanovicz felt that reducing the custodial/maintenance staff by 3 makes sense as well as the early retirement incentive for teachers. Regarding the computer equipment she needs to know the numbers. Last, she would like to know where the two behavior classrooms would be. Mr. Geary stated that is unknown at this time.

Mr. Pattacini supports the additional proposed cuts.

Mr. Leon asked if anyone was opposed to the early retirement incentive. No one was opposed.

Mr. Geary noted that the administrator's wage freeze offer came with a one year contract extension. There was consensus for that as well.

Mr. Pattacini reviewed the tutors are already in a wage freeze, the MEA has not replied, and the secretarial and custodial unions have not been asked.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

James Tierinni, 106 Henry Street, spoke about Saturday Math, of which he is the program coordinator. This is his passion and he is disappointed to see this program cut as it will have a negative impact on students. The students are taught in small groups to allow for success. The program provides a large impact for a small amount of money. Data indicates its success. The program was started in 2013 and students can use the class for grade recovery if they receive a D or F. Over 230 students have benefitted from this class, which quickly provides support to help provide a base for future math classes. He is concerned that by eliminating this program we will lose an opportunity to help close the achievement gap. Mr. Tierinni understands this is a difficult budget season, however this is a low-cost initiative that makes a difference.

Nikki Ortiz, 111 Waddell Road, works at Robertson. When she accepted a position in Manchester three years ago the support of coaches was one of the things that stood out. She has been grateful for her coaching support with

planning, instruction, and classroom management. The new programs being implemented in the district are overwhelming for new teachers and she would not have been as effective without the help of her coaches. Ms. Ortiz fails to see how shared coaches could provide support in the same fashion.

Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, suggested the book *Emotional Intelligence* by Walton. He pointed out an article about psychopathic behavior in a child in Wisconsin. Mr. Stringfellow thinks special education is vital and suggested the book *Thinking Differently*.

****Mr. Geary** noted that Ms. Clancy had done the numbers. The technology budget should be 0.5% of the full budget, or \$558,000. He recommends reducing that to \$455,000.

F. CLOSING COMMENTS

Ms. Stefanovicz appreciates the members of the community who spoke. She did not realize what Saturday Math was and that it impacts about 45 students a year. She would like to see that program saved and in turn the non-affiliates 1% wage increase can be dropped to zero.

Mr. Leon feels Ms. Stefanovicz made a good suggestion as he knows many were unhappy with cutting that program. He also likes that she suggested an alternative cut, which he always asks Board members to do if they suggest not cutting something.

G. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Board Secretary