

**Merrimack School Board Special Meeting
January 9, 2013
Merrimack High School – Cafeteria**

PUBLIC SESSION BUDGET WORKSHOP MINUTES

PRESENT: Chairman Ortega, Vice Chairman Powell, Board members Markwell, Barnes and Schneider and Superintendent Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent McLaughlin and Business Administrator Shevenell.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Ortega called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Participation

There was no public participation.

3. Budget Discussions

- James Masticola Elementary School, Reeds Ferry Elementary School, Thorntons Ferry Elementary School

Chairman Ortega introduced Principals Bridey Bellemare, Kim Yarlott and Emilie Carter and Assistant Principals Sharon Putney, Nick Coler and Jay Gratton.

Chairman Ortega announced that Sharon Putney was the recipient of the Elementary Assistant Principal of the Year for the State of New Hampshire.

Principal Bellemare spoke on behalf of the three K-4 elementary school budgets. She reported that the 2013-14 budget for all three elementary schools were less than the 2012-2013 budget due to a decrease in student enrollment. She added all three elementary school budgets were responsible and included components of the District's Logic Model and the five-year furniture replacement plan.

Principal Bellemare provided answers to the following questions submitted by Budget Committee Member Gary Krupp.

Question: The Gifted and Talented line items were reduced by 25%. Is the district moving away from supporting Gifted and Talented programs in the elementary schools?

Answer: The reduction in the Gifted and Talented account is an attempt to be fiscally responsible. The decrease in the budget will not impact the quality of the Gifted and Talented program. If additional money is needed for the Gifted and Talented program the elementary school administrators feel confident that the parent groups will provide assistance.

Question: What memberships are provided by the membership line item? Why are they needed?

Answer: The membership account covers the cost of memberships to state and national principal associations. The association memberships are part of the administrators' contract. Memberships are valuable for professional development opportunities and keeping current with curriculum and instruction and best practices.

Principal Yarlott provided the answer to the following question submitted by Budget Committee Member Gary Krupp.

Question: The music instruction and repairs account at Reeds Ferry was cut significantly from the previous budget. What supplies and equipment is the district no longer buying? What is the impact to the delivery of instruction?

Answer: The Reeds Ferry Elementary School music account increased from \$100 to \$200 in 2012-13 to cover the cost of tuning a piano. The piano does not require tuning this year; therefore, the account returned to \$100. The 50% reduction to the music account does not impact the music program.

Vice Chairman Powell asked for the number of radios in each of the elementary schools. He questioned if the money allocated for radios was for replacement or new radios.

Principal Bellemare replied each elementary school budget included funds to purchase four new radios. She noted that Thorntons Ferry Elementary School currently has 47 radios, James Masticola Elementary School has 48 radios and Reeds Ferry Elementary School has 33 radios. It will take four years before each school reaches the desired number of radios.

Vice Chairman Powell questioned why the budget for police detail at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School was higher than Reeds Ferry Elementary School or James Masticola Elementary School.

Principal Bellemare stated that the location of the entrance to Thorntons Ferry Elementary School is challenging. Police detail is necessary for safety purposes on a regular basis.

Board Member Schneider questioned why there was a slight decrease in the elementary school field trip accounts.

Principal Bellemare explained that the decrease in student enrollment resulted in the need for fewer busses.

Board Member Schneider asked if the radios are tracked differently now than before.

Business Administrator Shevenell replied that the district has been making due with the current method of purchasing and replacing radios. He reported that he has been communicating with a vendor about the possibility of obtaining the desired number of radios through a lease option.

Board Member Schneider asked for clarification with regards to the conference room furniture at Thorntons Ferry Elementary School.

Principal Bellemare explained the purchase of new furniture is separate from the five-year furniture replacement plan. The conference room furniture would be a one time purchase of new furniture.

Board Member Barnes expressed her concern that the ratio of radios at the three elementary schools was not consistent. She stated if the district were to lease the desired number of radios for each elementary school her concern would be eliminated. If leasing of radios does not occur during the 2013-14 budget, she requested that the board provide Reeds Ferry Elementary School with additional radios.

Board Member Markwell questioned the difference in the elementary school phone budgets.

Principal Bellemare stated that Thorntons Ferry Elementary School is a Nashua exchange.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that it could be attributed to different call volumes and/or related to internet charges. The variance may be eliminated should the district switch to Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP).

Vice Chairman Powell stated that the schools are not currently able to communicate via radio to one another in an evacuation situation. He questioned if the schools had direct communication with the police department.

Administrator Shevenell reported that Police Chief Doyle provided each school with one police radio.

Chairman Ortega added that the three elementary school budgets for 2013-14 were very similar to last year. He emphasized that the Gifted and Talented program will remain in place.

- James Masticola Upper Elementary School

Chairman Ortega introduced Principal Marsha McGill and Assistant Principal William Morris.

Principal McGill reported that the 2013-14 budget for the upper elementary school was less than the 2012-13 budget due to a decline in student enrollment. She noted that the upper elementary school budget was reflective of the District's Logic Model, continued purchase of texts and instructional materials for literacy, writing and math; the furniture replacement plan and support for the band and the expanding choral program.

Board Member Barnes asked if there was a lease option for the instrument costing \$3,000.

Assistant Principal Morris explained that the lease options cost more than what made sense when compared to the initial purchase for the instrument.

Board Member Schneider asked if a lease would include repairs and maintenance.

Principal McGill replied that she would investigate that answer.

Board Member Schneider questioned why the upper elementary school needed new risers.

Principal McGill responded that the chorus program has increased in size and new risers are needed to accommodate all students.

Chairman Ortega noted that the upper elementary school budget was very straight forward.

- Merrimack Middle School

Chairman Ortega introduced Principal Debbie Woelflein and Assistant Principal Adam Caragher.

Principal Woelflein reported that the middle school budget represents a maintenance level budget. The middle school budget supports building initiatives within the Logic Model, literacy, math, technology and learning environment.

Principal Woelflein noted that next year will be the third year of a five year plan developed to respond to the changing population trends of seventh and eighth grade and also meet the state standards for class size and instructional time.

Principal Woelflein provided answers to the following questions submitted by Budget Committee Member Gary Krupp.

Question: The middle school computer education/equipment replacement account was cut significantly from the previous budget or eliminated completely. Several other supply accounts were trimmed also. What supplies and equipment are we no longer buying? What is the impact to the delivery of instruction?

Answer: The reason the computer education/equipment replacement account remains low is because the library budget has budgeted money to lease computers to replace older computers. The math/equipment replacement account was eliminated from the 2013-14 budget because there are a sufficient number of calculators to meet the needs of the students next year. Student learning will not be affected in either case.

Board Member Markwell asked why there was an increase in the instructional equipment repair account.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that the amount of the instructional equipment repair account is based on the number of photo copies made during the year. He averaged the copier cost over the last three years. Most of the expense is the cost to lease the copiers and the annual service contracts for the copiers. The utilization of the copiers has increased.

Board Member Barnes asked which sports participated in tournaments and asked for a breakdown between girls' and boys' teams.

Assistant Principal Caragher responded four different teams participate in outside tournaments. The teams are the wrestling team, the spirit team, cross country team and track and field team.

Board Member Schneider asked for an explanation for the increase to the athletic supplies account.

Assistant Principal Caragher stated that the biggest factor is the need to replace the girl's field hockey team uniforms.

Board Member Schneider questioned if the washer and dryer for Family and Consumer Science was a new purchase or a replacement.

Assistant Principal Caragher explained that the purchase would be to replacement the existing washer and dryer.

Board Member Schneider asked if the budget for memberships would be listed under one separate account in order to keep them separate from state funded money.

Chairman Ortega stated that the board would discuss having a separate account for all district memberships at a future meeting.

Vice Chairman Powell asked for an explanation why there was a \$3,000 balance in the athletic account at the end of last year.

Assistant Principal Caragher stated that the budgeted amount includes enough money for all the teams to participate in championships. It is not uncommon to under spend in that account.

Chairman Ortega did not have any additional items and thanked Principal Woelflein and Assistant Principal Caragher for their presentation.

- Maintenance

Chairman Ortega introduced Director of Maintenance Tom Touseau.

Director Touseau reported the major items in the maintenance budget are a secured entrance at James Masticola Upper Elementary School, the asbestos abatement at James Masticola Elementary School and the roof repairs at Merrimack High School.

Board Member Schneider questioned the difference between the expended rubbish disposal amount and the budgeted rubbish disposal amount.

Business Administrator Shevenell noted that the rubbish bid is very competitive and that he will review the rubbish disposal budget again.

Maintenance Director Touseau stated that the rubbish budget was very close to the 2010-2011 budget.

Board Member Schneider asked if the carpet in the library at Reeds Ferry Elementary School was a safety concern.

Board Member Barnes stated that she has walked on the carpet in the library and it needs to be replaced.

Maintenance Director Touseau affirmed that the library rug at Reeds Ferry Elementary School was a hazard.

Chairman Ortega reminded the board that the replacement of carpet library rug at Reeds Ferry Elementary has been removed from previous budgets.

Board Member Schneider asked why the oil usage at special services building was higher than the superintendent's office building.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that the heat was controlled by one zone.

Board Member Markwell asked why there was a significant increase in the gas budget at the middle school and Masticola Complex.

Maintenance Director Touseau explained that he averaged the cost of gas over the last three years and added two percent to formulate the 2013-2014 budget.

Board Member Markwell asked why there was an increase in the cost of electricity at the middle school.

Maintenance Director Touseau explained that he averaged the cost of the electricity over the last three years and added two percent to formulate his budget for 2013-2014.

Business Administrator Shevenell explained that electricity is purchased by two vendors. There was an increase in the Public Service of New Hampshire electricity.

Board Member Markwell noted that it is expensive to heat the high school with oil and that it has not been possible to convert the school to gas in the past. He asked if that was still the case.

Maintenance Director Touseau stated that he was exploring options for gas heat at the high school and the Masticola Complex; however, did not have enough information to present to the board at this time.

Board Member Barnes asked if last year's mild winter had been considered when calculating the budget for oil and gas.

Maintenance Director Touseau stated that because of last year's mild winter, he used a four year average plus two percent for formulate the 2013-2014 oil budget.

Chairman Ortega asked which gym floors would be refinished in this budget.

Maintenance Director Touseau stated that all gym floors will be refinished; not all gym floors will be sanded.

Chairman Ortega noted that the administration provided the board with three tiers of proposed reductions for the 2013-2014 budget. He noted the high school roof repair could not be deferred to another year without risk. He expressed his concern that future roof replacements throughout the district will each be moved out by one year if this project is delayed one year. He asked how this deferred repair might impact future roof repairs district wide.

Maintenance Director Touseau stated that the roofs are in a better situation now than in 2009 when the high school roof failed or in 2011 when there were issues with the Reeds Ferry Elementary School roof or in 2012 when repairs were made to James Masticola Elementary School roof. He explained that he was comfortable with the long range roof replacement plan. He stated that he can not foresee emergencies, but felt that any problems could be addressed.

Business Administrator Shevenell stated that a delay this year followed by a shift in the roof replacement schedule for a few years followed by two roof items in one year would return the roof replacement plan back to the original schedule.

Chairman Ortega stated that the high school roof replacement was on the Capital Improvement Plan. The board needs to consider all options. If the Board decides to defer the high school roof replacement then the board needs to revisit the Capital Improvement Plan.

Board Member Markwell asked which high school roof section was more critical, section B or section C.

Maintenance Director Touseau replied there was not much difference in the sections. He was comfortable that section B and section C could be deferred. He noted that sections C and C1 should be replaced at the same time.

Board Member Markwell asked what type of roof would replace the existing high school roof.

Maintenance Director Touseau reported he would replace the existing high school roof with a built up roof that carries a 30-year warranty.

4. Board Discussion

Chairman Ortega asked the Board if there was a need for follow up on areas covered this evening and if there were questions on the items listed on the budget cut list presented by the administration.

The Board did not have any further questions.

Chairman Ortega proposed that the January 16 meeting be used to deliberate on the budget and approve the budget, if possible.

Board Member Markwell suggested that the January 16 meeting be used to deliberate the budget. He preferred to wait to finalize and approve the budget at the January 22 meeting. He felt it would provide the Board with a few days to review its January 16th work.

Board Member Barnes agreed with Board Member Markwell's recommendation. She noted that it also gives the public an opportunity to provide the Board with feedback before the board approves the budget.

Chairman Ortega announced School Board budget hearings on Monday, January 14th and Wednesday, January 16th. He noted both meetings would begin at 7:00 p.m. at Merrimack High School in the cafeteria.

Chairman Ortega announced that the January 22nd School Board meeting would be held at Merrimack High School rather than the Town Hall meeting room. The meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m.

5. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Tracy Bull of 5 Independence Drive spoke as a parent of a student that plays the baritone saxophone. A baritone saxophone can cost from \$7,000 to \$25,000 and are not available for rent. She stated that she has rented many instruments and the maintenance has been a separate cost. A baritone saxophone is a very expensive instrument to maintain. If the district has the opportunity to purchase a baritone saxophone for \$3,000 it is a very good deal for the district.

At 8:25 p.m., Board Member Markwell moved (seconded by Vice Chairman Powell) to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed 5-0-0.