

Merrimack School District Budget Committee
January 30, 2018
Minutes

Present: K. Bobbitt, H. Gage, J. Guagliumi, J. Hanson, S. Heinrich, A. Hyde-Berger D. Illg, C. Lang (attended by phone), C. Mower and School Board Liaison N. Schoenfeld

Excused: B. Nunez, S. Jacoby

Also present: Superintendent M. Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent Dr. M. McLaughlin, School Business Administrator M. Shevenell and various department heads

S. Heinrich called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M and asked N. Schoenfeld to lead those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Carol Lang joined the meeting via speakerphone. She said she was in Satellite Beach, Florida and there was no one in the room with her.

Department Budget Reviews

Food Service

Department Head: David Dziki

Committee Liaisons: H. Gage, S. Heinrich, J. Hanson and C. Lang

Liaison Report: H. Gage told the Committee that the Food Service budget is basically level funded. She said the Department has to follow Federal guidelines and manages its budget well.

D. Dziki said that Food Service department provides meals for all six schools. He highlighted two equipment requests in the budget: two new hot display cases which will result in more consistent serving temperatures and a stainless steel work table to replace a current work table that has structural issues. He said the District is part of a New Hampshire Food Service "Buying Group" that results in better food prices.

Discussion included the following:

- Food service is a special revenue fund. All money taken in by the department are retained by the Food Service.
- The Department receives Federal funds and by law, the average cost of lunches has to be greater than the free or reduced lunch cost.
- Food service uses Styrofoam lunch trays because compostable trays cost significantly more.

Special Services

Department Head: John Fabrizio

Committee Liaisons: D. Illg, N. Schoenfeld, A. Hyde-Berger

Liaison Report: D. Illg told the Committee that the current Special Services budget proposal is up 2.48% from last year's budget. He said the budget proposed to the School Board was up 2.65% but the School Board made some cuts in the tutoring lines of the budget. He mentioned

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areas of note in the budget were requests for sound field systems and a van to replace the current 10 year-old van as well as a one-time request for a document management program.

J. Fabrizio told the Committee that the budget is built to meet the needs of over 600 specific children following Federal laws which require children be given a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. He said the Department provides supports, services and resources for these children sometimes within the Merrimack School District and sometimes out-of-district which could be a day placement or a residential placement. He said that he projects a reduction of 10 students for next year, but that the Department does not actually know what will happen between now and the start of the next school year.

J. Fabrizio said that the District is a member district of the non-profit SERESC and that SERESC provides various special services such as psychological assessments to the District, but that SERESC will no longer be offering such services. As a result, the Department has researched alternative for-profit vendors.

Discussion included the following:

- School Board cut to tutoring lines
 - The Department reviewed the tutoring budget lines for the last six budgets and found they have been under-expended by at least \$20,000.
 - Tutors are paid a set rate and this cut equates to 1,000 hours of tutoring.
 - If there is a need for more tutoring funding (or in fact, any other special service that a student needs during the next school), there is an expendable trust fund that can be used to cover these additional needs.
 - The Committee could restore the cut funds to the budget and if not used, the funds will be returned to the taxpayers.
 - The School Board is not looking to cut services but wants to be sure the correct amount is being proposed.
- Transportation
 - The current Special Services transportation contract ends this year.
 - After a bid process, the new provider was chosen.
 - The new contract is a five year contract with an increase of 3.5% each year.
 - In some cases, the District does reimburse parents to pay to transport their children to school.
- The expendable trust fund was used five years ago when the District needed to pay for an unanticipated out-of-district placement.

Technology/Library/Media Services

Department Head: N. Rose

Liaisons: J. Hanson, B. Nunez and C. Mower

Liaison Report: J. Hanson said network capacity is a big part of the proposed budget. He said the budget includes re-wiring, increasing band width, upgrades to mobile carts, upgrades to intercom systems, and increasing the number of internet access points in each building. He said that nearly all classrooms now have projectors so the department is now shifting its focus from installation to maintenance. He said the library still buys books to support the curriculum as well.

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N. Rose told the Committee that the budget proposed additional infra-structure upgrades and is working with the Special Services Department on the sound field systems. Special Services buys the equipment and Technology/Library/Media installs them. She indicated the proposed budget was for mainly maintenance and support though she said there was a line item for STEM learning opportunities.

Discussion included the following

- The Department is gradually replacing older cabling.
- The rebinding costs in the budget are for re-binding books that are part of the collection and are not textbooks.
- The Department is working to be current and protect itself from being constantly behind the curve in new technology but does not replace with new if what it has works well and is still “current.”

Maintenance

Tom Tousseau, and Business Administrator M. Shevenell
Committee Liaisons: J. Guagliumi, C. Lang and S. Heinrich

Liaison Report: J. Guagliumi told the Committee that the Maintenance Department works to keep the District’s infrastructure working as economically as possible. He said that in a general sense, this budget is level funded and there are three components of the budget that are significant: replacing some outside bleachers at the high school, roof reconstruction at Reeds Ferry Elementary School and the addition of a water filtration system at all school. He further explained the bleachers are old and not ADA compliant; the section of roof at Reeds Ferry proposed for replacement went out of warranty 10 years ago and the filtration system will filter PFOAs on consumable water only.

S. Heinrich thanked the School Board for taking a positive step for safety of the children.

T. Tousseau explained the filtration system proposed is a two tank system, which will result in no PFOAs in the water. He indicated the system will filter water to the kitchens, bubblers and nurse’s offices. He said the new system will require that new piping to these areas be installed. He also said that 85% of the water used in the schools is flushed.

T. Tousseau explained further that the budget is proposing replacing only one small section of the outside high school bleachers at this time. Replacement of other sections is in the C.I.P. The section proposed for replacement does not have center hand rails for safety. T. Tousseau said that the sections of Reeds Ferry School roof that are to be replaced are in the C.I.P for this year and they do leak. He indicated that there are several other roof projects in the C.I.P. which will be coming up over the next few years.

T. Tousseau highlighted one other project in the budget: replacing some worn out original sinks at Masticola Elementary School. He said there are a total of 22 sinks in question and the budget proposes replacing half this year with the intent to replace the rest next year

Discussion included the following:

- Filtration system
 - Current piping will not be re-used.

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- The schools are testing for PFOAs in water at the schools and will continue to do so even with a filtration system.
- The School Board is discussing possible reimbursement for the cost of the filtration system.
- The Department hopes each filtration tank will last 3 – 4 years. Each tank costs \$3,500.
- The filtration system will use activated charcoal rather than reverse osmosis because it takes up a smaller footprint. It is also less expensive and has a better flow rate than reverse osmosis.
- Painting projects, such as school signs, are discussed with the principals and evaluated yearly.
- There was a one-time cost for sewer pipes when the track was replaced in last year's budget.
- Reeds Ferry Roof Replacement
 - The sections of roof to be replaced at Reeds Ferry are over the gymnasium and joining ends, i.e. the areas making up the last additions.
 - The new roof has a 30 – 40 year non-pro-rated warranty and is being installed by a vendor approved by the roofing company.
- The District has applied for a grant of \$180,000 to cover some of the costs of the bat remediation project.
- Cameras
 - The current budget focus is cameras at the high school and the middle school. However, in future years, cameras will be proposed for other schools.
 - Current cameras need to be upgraded from analog to IP.
 - There were questions about the amount of administrative time that cameras save.
 - Cameras would seem to help keep children safe: on the playground as well as during times when busses are present.
 - There is no cost advantage to funding cameras at all schools in one year, but doing so would mean that all schools would have cameras.

At 8:45 PM, S. Heinrich called for a 10 minute recess. D. Illg left the meeting at this time

At 8:55 PM, S. Heinrich called the meeting back to order.

District-Wide

Superintendent M. Chiafery, Assistant Superintendent Dr. M. McLaughlin, School Business Administrator M. Shevenell

Committee Liaisons: H. Gage, J. Hanson, C. Lang and S. Heinrich

Liaison Report: S. Heinrich reported that the District budget was up .74%. He indicated that the budget included a maximum guaranteed increase of 3.5%. He said the Administration and School Board had attempted to make the budget as level funded as possible and noted that the proposed budget is less than the default budget.

H. Gage said she appreciated the level budget but thought there might be a need for more funds for professional development.

M. Chiafery said Administration viewed the budget process holistically, considering not only the operating budget but also the warrant articles.

M. Shevenell told the Committee that much of the proposed operating budget is for contractual obligations: for example teacher salaries, transportation and health insurance. He said there are some needed maintenance projects in the operating budget but debt service has decreased.

Discussion included the following:

- Administration is working with Homeland Security to review safety needs at each school and expects to present a plan for additional security measures soon.
- Only 10% of the operating budget is discretionary.
- Administration will present figures on graduation rates at the next meeting.
- The proposed operating budget has been basically level funded for the last several years.

Other

S. Heinrich provided a draft copy of proposed warrant articles. He said the School Board has not yet voted on them so the Committee would not be discussing them until its next meeting. However, he offered M. Chiafery and M. Shevenell an opportunity to provide any quick information they felt the Committee should have at this time.

M. Chiafery said the proposed articles included the support staff contract, full day kindergarten and purchasing a pre-existing building potentially for use as the new SAU office. She said all the warrant articles were important and that all had been reviewed by the District's legal team and the Department of Revenue Administration.

M. Shevenell told the Committee Merrimack would get "keno funds" for full day kindergarten even if Merrimack does not have keno in town. He said with keno funds, the state would provide an additional \$1,000 per student if the District offers full day kindergarten to all children. However, keno funds would not fully pay for the costs of full day kindergarten. If passed, the additional salary/benefits costs would become part of the operating budget in ensuing years.

S. Heinrich announced that the next meeting would be a work session on the proposed budget and a review of warrant articles that involve money. He said that Committee could only adjust the budget bottom line. However, to provide direction for any adjustment made, S. Heinrich said that any member who has budget adjustments to propose should be prepared to provide the account number the adjustment would affect. He noted that, if a position was involved, M. Shevenell would provide a total cost including salary and benefits for the position.

Public Participation

There were no public participation

At this time, C. Lang left the meeting.

C. Mower made a MOTION to adjourn. Second: J. Guagliumi. MOTION PASSED.

S. Heinrich adjourned the meeting at 9:30 PM.