

Merrimack School District Budget Committee
January 23, 2020
Minutes

Present: L French, J. Guagliumi, S. Heinrich, A. Hunter, A. Hyde-Berger, D. Illg, C. Lang (by phone), C. Mower, G. Savitch, B. Stisser and School Board liaison A. Schneider

Excused: S. Jacoby and M. Murphy

Also present: Superintendent Dr. M. McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent J. Fabrizio, Assistant Superintendent for Business M. Shevenell and various department heads

S. Heinrich called the meeting to order at 7:04 P.M and asked new Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Mark McLaughlin, to lead those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcements

S. Heinrich asked the members to introduce themselves.

At this time, C. 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

Elementary Schools

MES – Principal Michelle Romein and Assistant Principal Allisha Hansen-Proulx

TFS – Principal Julie DeLuca and Assistant Principal Bonnie Painchaud

RFS – Principal Kim Yarlott and Assistant Principal Michaela Champlin

Committee Liaisons: D Illg, L. French, G. Savitch and A. Hunter

Liaison Report: D. Illg told the Committee that the budget is similar to prior budgets, though a couple of lines were increased due to rising populations at the elementary schools. He also mentioned the continuation of efforts to replace classroom furniture.

K. Yarlott told the Committee that the proposed elementary budgets also included some flexible seating options. She said the supply budget proposals were lower than last year because there was a one-time bump in the supply budgets last year to purchase the initial materials for the new social-emotional learning curriculum.

Discussion included the following:

- There is a “pause” in purchasing new curriculum materials until the next curriculum revision. The new math curriculum has a 6-year license.
- The elementary schools are looking at a grant to provide funding for a projection system with a screen in the gymnasium at each school.
- District enrollment projections:
 - Yearly, NESDEC provides the District an enrollment projection report using the October 1st enrollment numbers.

- This year, the projection report indicated that the district's total enrollment will increase 50-60 students each year over the next 5 years.
- Since October 1st, the district's total enrollment has increased by 109 students.
- The cost of the additional staff requested at the elementary level to meet the increased population is included in the District-Wide budget.
- Desk and chair replacement at all elementary schools is almost complete.

Mastricola Upper Elementary School

Principal Marsha McGill and Assistant Principal William Morris

Committee Liaisons: S. Jacoby, C. Mower and A. Hyde-Berger.

Liaison report: C. Mower told the Committee that there is a modest furniture replacement plan in the proposed budget but the budget as proposed is \$9,000 less than last year's proposed budget. He said that progress is being made to meet the furniture and facility needs of the upper elementary school.

M. McGill told the Committee that the budget focuses on the literacy program needs and continues the effort to replace cafeteria tables as well as starts a 3-year plan to replace the old tables in the computer lab.

Discussion included the following:

- The shape of the tables being purchased encourages education of and interaction between students.
- Based on the October 1st enrollment, the enrollment at the upper elementary was projected to be down next year. However, based on current enrollment numbers, the enrollment is projected to increase to 570 students next fall.
- Since Enterprise City has closed, this field trip has been replaced with a career day which comes at a lower cost.
- In Merrimack, teaching World Languages (Spanish and French) starts at the fifth grade. Students receive half a year of basic training in each language, in both 5th and 6th grade.
- Mastricola Upper Elementary student scores on state assessment tests compete with state average.
- Administration prefers to replace older furniture over several budget years while taking into account furniture condition and utility.

Merrimack Middle School

Principal Adam Caragher and Assistant Principal Shawna D'Amour

Committee Liaisons: G. Savitch, J. Guagliumi and S. Jacoby

Liaison Report: G. Savitch told the Committee that the proposed budget is right on par with prior budgets. She noted there is a 3.5% increase in transportation costs and a 10% increase in office supplies – both increases were reflected in each of the school budgets. She said the budget also includes the start of plan to replace 2 cafeteria tables a year.

A. Caragher told the Committee that the budget is trying to maintain current programs and address issues to help the students succeed.

Discussion included the following:

- The new roof is wonderful.
- Merrimack Middle School student scores on state assessment tests are slightly below the state average.
- The District has invested in curriculum advancement programs to help increase student ability to learn as well as improve the learning environment.
- MMS athletic fields
 - Use is limited due to a drainage problem.
 - Both sports teams and physical education classes are affected by the situation.
 - There is \$75,000 in the Maintenance budget for piping and underground drainage at the field to help alleviate the problem.
- A new Tech Ed and FACS curriculum was implemented last year which required one-time purchase of new equipment and materials. As a result those budget lines have been zeroed out in the proposed budget.

D. Illg left the meeting during this discussion.

Merrimack High School

Principal Sharon Putney and Assistant Principals Richard Zampieri & Peter Bergeron
Committee Liaisons: D. Illg, M. Murphy and A. Hyde-Berger

Liaison Report: A. Hyde-Berger told the Committee that the proposed budget is similar to prior budgets. She said the budget does include some furniture replacement and that the school is looking at a futures lab for students with special needs. There are a couple of increases in transportation and coach training costs. She said she thought the staff had done a great job using the funds they receive.

S. Putney told the Committee that several budget lines were reduced or level-funded and that there are continued efforts to reduce paper consumption. She indicated that there are some proposed increased costs for replacement of worn materials and increased costs in supplies, in athletics and transportation. The athletics increases involve assigner and officials fees as well as additional funds for coaches training and transportation costs to away games. She said the physical education department is requesting funds to purchase anti-choke trainers, AED trainers and new CPR manikins. The math department has requested calculators to support the implementation of the new math curriculum.

Discussion included the following:

- An assigner is the person who assigns who plays who, when and where.
- 504s
 - There was a 2A grant that was used to partially fund the 504 coordinator. The focus of the grant has changed so the District has had to pay the full budget amount.
 - There are not a lot of other grant opportunities to fund this area and those available are very constrictive.
 - A 504 plan provides accommodations for students needing special assistance.

- There are state and federal laws mandating compliance with 504 plans.
- Transportation to Vocational Education (Voc Ed) Students
 - The School Board cut the proposed request to make the amount budgeted closer to the 5-year average expenditure.
 - Voc Ed Centers in New Hampshire are regionally located. Merrimack sends students to several Voc Ed Centers in the area.
 - State regulations require school districts to provide transportation to voc ed students.
 - The number of students attending voc ed varies each year depending on how many slots are available for Merrimack students.
 - The District's "regular" bus company provides the transport for voc ed students.
- The default budget is figured using the total of each general category in the budget. While some individual lines within the each general category may be for a specific one time purchase, the general category has continuing yearly expenditures.
- The Family ID program that will allow for on-line sports registrations integrates with My School Bucks (the lunch program software) and is being tested for other uses, for example integrating with PowerSchool.
- There is a user fee for My School Bucks (\$2.49) that is passed on to the users. If the District finds out that parents don't use the program because the user fee is too high, the District will look into reducing it.
- There is no student fee to participate in athletics. The District provides the basics for each sport. There are many active booster clubs that pick up additional costs.
- The new District Wide math curriculum, Envision Math, is a dual platform learning system: traditional teaching enhanced and extended with technology. The District is currently looking at a similar dual platform curriculum for English language.

Next Meeting

S. Heinrich reminded the Committee the next meeting would be held Tuesday, January 28th at Merrimack High School. He said the meeting would include Food Service, Student Services, Library & Technological Services, Maintenance and District-Wide Department Budget Reviews.

At this time, C. Lang left the meeting.

Public Participation

Traci Wolf (Independence Drive) told the Committee that pay to play was raised as a budget possibility several years ago (2007?). She said people came out in droves against the idea and it was found that the cost savings to the taxpayer were negligible.

Approval of Prior Minutes

C. Mower made a MOTION to approve the minutes of December 10, 2019. Second: J. Guagliumi. MOTION PASSED 6 – 0 – 2. (A. Hunter and A Hyde-Berger abstained.)

C. Mower made a MOTION to approve the minutes of January 7, 2020. Second: J. Guagliumi. MOTION PASSED 6 – 0 – 2. (A. Schneider and A Hyde-Berger abstained.)

Other

A. Hunter asked whether it was possible to see the windows that the School Board is proposing to replace at some point before, during or after the next Committee meeting at the high school.

Dr. McLaughlin offered to facilitate a tour for any members who wanted see the windows in question.

S. Heinrich reminded the members that no more than 6 members could tour together or the tour would be considered a meeting.

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

S. Heinrich adjourned the meeting at 8:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jen and Pat Heinrich