

Merrimack School District Budget Committee
Minutes
January 19, 2016

Present: K. Bobbitt, B. Cummings, S. Heinrich, L. Mooney, C. Lang (via telephone, after meeting started), J. Guagliumi, J. Hanson, S. Jacoby and School Board liaison D. Powell

Excused: D. Illg, C. Ortega, and C. Mower

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 7:08 P.M. and asked Kevin Bobbitt to lead those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Prior Minutes

B. Cummings made a MOTION to approve the minutes of December 8, 2015. Second: S. Jacoby. MOTION PASSED: 6 – 0 – 2. L. Mooney and J. Hanson abstaining.

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

Department Budget Reviews

Elementary Schools

Principal and Assistant Principal: MES –Emilie Carter and Michelle Romein
TFS – Bridey Bellemare and Julie DeLuca
RFS – Kim Yarlott and Nick Coler

Committee Liaisons: B. Cummings, J. Hanson and S. Jacoby

Liaison Report: B. Cummings said that the highlight of each school's budget was the second year of a five-year furniture replacement plan. In addition, he noted funds have been budgeted to replace the amplifier in the P.A. System and two 30 year-old basketball hoops at Reeds Ferry School. He said there is an increase in the Facilities Development line at Thorntons Ferry School to purchase and install an appropriate playground structure for the new pre-school program there. S. Jacoby and J. Hanson both indicated that they found the budget straightforward.

E. Carter thanked the liaison team for taking a careful look at the budget.

Discussion included the following:

- Thorntons Ferry School is the only elementary school without a preschool program.
- The implementation of a pre-school program at Thorntons Ferry School won't be finalized until the proposed budget passes.
- Pre-school students from the Thorntons Ferry area are currently taught at other District schools.
- No additional staff would be required. (Current staff from other schools would be transferred to Thorntons Ferry.)

A pre-school program needs its own enclosed, exclusive play area.

Mental Health Committee:

S. Heinrich told the Committee that last year several members had raised concerns about mental health workers in the budget. As a result, the Administration has organized a Mental Health Sub-Committee to take a broader look at district mental health issues. S. Heinrich asked the co-chairs of the Mental Health Sub-Committee, Julie Deluca and John Fabrizio, to come forward and address the Budget Committee.

J. Deluca told the Committee that their research has shown that successful school districts have worked to arrange for community and school partners to implement mental health supports for all students. She said that the Sub-Committee is looking at the depth and scope of current District Mental Health services to determine strengths and weaknesses as well as looking at what other school districts do, what services are out there and what services students need. She said the Sub-Committee hopes to develop a multi-year, multi-stage plan by June. However, there will be no budgetary impact for FY 2016-17. She said the Sub-Committee is also looking at grants and other funding resources that might be available for these services,

Discussion included the following:

- The proposal may be to have counseling available at each school or someone available for fine-tuning I.E.P.s
- Some of the proposed services proposed may be specific to some students with I.E.P.s and some may be more global or relate to all students in any given school.
- The proposed plan will have specific deliverables and an itemized cost listing.
- The Sub-Committee has met with the state Department of Education as well as Merrimack state representatives for discussion on process, services and funding possibilities.

Members requested an overview of what other school districts are doing.

Department Budget Reviews

Mastricola Upper Elementary School

Principal and Assistant Principal: Marcia McGill and William Morris

Committee Liaisons: S. Jacoby, C. Ortega, and C. Mower

Liaison Report: S. Jacoby stated the proposed budget continues the school's focus on resources to support literacy instruction and the implementation of standards-based math instruction. In addition, She said the upper elementary has proposed funds for the second phase of purchasing replacement cafeteria tables. She ended her comments by saying everything in the proposed budget is right on track.

M. Gill thanked the liaisons for meeting with her.

Discussion included the following:

- The new secured entrance is working very well.

Merrimack Middle School

Principal and Assistant Principal: Adam Caragher, Shawna D'Amour

Liaison – L. Mooney, D. Illg and J. Guagliumi

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Liaison Report: L. Mooney said the total increase in the middle school budget was \$5,000. She said the biggest item of note was adding an inter-scholastic volleyball team. She said the school currently has an intramural team and with the success of the team at the high school, it makes sense to have an inter-scholastic team at the middle school. She said she discussed declining enrollment and possible use of some space to meet District administrative needs with Principal Caragher, but there are no easy answers. She ended her report by noting there was not a whole lot happening in the budget.

Discussion included the following:

- There are discussions with the high school about how to “go about” establishing a volleyball team and getting a coach.
- There are quite a few middle schools that have inter-scholastic volleyball teams.
- Cell phone service is virtually non-existent at the middle school and there is no interest in the part of any carrier to put up a tower in the area. The District has tried to use repeaters in the school to help the situation.
- The proposed Blood Road development and road extension is on hold at the moment. The School District does have concerns about possible impact on bus schedules.
- There is \$1,000 proposed in the Tech Ed budget for module replacement texts.

High School

Principal and Assistant Principals: Ken Johnson, Richard Zampieri & Peter Bergeron

Committee Liaisons: K. Bobbitt, J. Hanson, C. Lang and D. Powell

Liaison Report: K. Bobbitt thanked the high school principals for meeting with the liaison team. He said the team went line by line to review the proposed budget in depth. He indicated some of the bigger budget increases are the result of more students taking AP classes, which means a need to buy more AP texts. In addition, he said there is an increase in funding for co-curricular transportation costs. J. Hanson said that the liaison team looked at the the budget variations and all their questions were answered. D. Powell said that the high school has been on the AP Honor Roll for three of the last four years and that Merrimack students are scoring very well on standard tests.

K. Johnson told the Committee that the high school has a wide variety of co-curricular activities and some of these teams go to state or national competitions. He said the proposed budget tries to bring equity and parity between co-curricular teams and athletic teams as far as transportation costs.

There were no Committee questions.

Special Services

Department Head: John Fabrizio

Committee Liaisons: B. Cummings, C. Ortega and K. Bobbitt

Liaison Report: B. Cummings reported that the proposed budget is projecting costs for approximately 685 students, which he said was about 17.5% of the total student population. He said there were two Federal laws that the District must follow: “Least Restrictive Environment” and “Free and Appropriate Education.” He said there are funds in the proposed budget for think

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pads which are used for computer assessment and staff crisis prevention training. K. Bobbitt told the Committee the Department is thoughtful and responsible with its equipment budget choices; for example, it buys expensive I-pads for preschoolers because they are more durable than other choices but buys less expensive tablets for high school students and teachers.

J. Fabrizio told the Committee that the proposed budget was built on the needs of specific students and that there is no budgetary impact on this budget for establishing a pre-school at Thorntons Ferry.

Discussion included the following:

- J. Fabrizio discusses technology needs with Library/Media Services Director Nancy Rose. He said he knows about the organic needs of various devices and she knows which vendors to use.
- While overall student population is declining, the percentage of students with special needs has stayed around 17%.
- There is state catastrophic aid to help offset expensive out of district placements (O.D.Ps), but the aid comes as a reimbursement the year following the expenditure.
- The state sets the rates for in-state O.D.Ps.

Before proceeding to Public Participation, S. Heinrich asked if Superintendent M. Chiafery or Business Administrator M. Shevenell had anything to add to the various department reviews. Neither did.

Public Participation

There was no public participation

Other

S. Heinrich told everyone that the next meeting of the Committee would be on January 26th and the Committee would review the proposed budgets for Library/Media Services, Food Services, Maintenance and District-Wide.

S. Heinrich also reminded everyone that the Public Hearing on the proposed budget was scheduled for February 9th, which was also the date of the Presidential Primary. Since the high school was being used for the primary, the Public Hearing is scheduled for the Masticola Elementary School All Purpose Room. However, if the Public Hearing on February 9th is cancelled, the alternate date and location is February 11th at the high school.

At this time, C. Lang ended her telephonic participation in the meeting.

B. Cummings made a MOTION to adjourn. Second: K. Bobbitt. MOTION PASSED unanimously.

S. Heinrich adjourned the meeting at 8:21 PM.