

Budget Committee  
Minutes  
January 31, 2017

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

Excused: S. Jacoby

Absent: 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 7:10PM and asked H. Gage to lead those present in the  
Pledge of Allegiance.

**Announcements**

S. Heinrich announced that the meeting originally scheduled for January 24<sup>th</sup> had been cancelled  
due to weather and would be made up on February 2, 2017.

S. Heinrich announced that there had been no responses to the advertisements about the vacant  
seats on the Board which was why the Committee had not met since November.

S. Heinrich announced that Caitlyn Ortega had moved out of town which effectively terminated  
her position on the Committee.

S. Heinrich welcomed N. Schoenfeld to her first meeting as the School Board liaison and  
announced that School Board Chair Shannon Barnes would be serving as the School Board  
alternate should the need arise.

**Approval of Prior Minutes**

J. Hanson asked if C. Lang should be contacted before the minutes were approved. S. Heinrich  
explained that any vote taken when a member participates telephonically must be a roll call vote.

K. Bobbitt made a MOTION to approve the minutes of November 29, 2016 subject to correction.  
Second: H. Gage. J. Hanson offered several grammatical corrections. MOTION PASSED 6 –  
0 – 1 (N. Schoenfeld abstaining.)

C. Lang joined the meeting by telephone at this time and told the Committee she was in Satellite  
Beach, Florida and was alone. J

**Department Budget Reviews**

**Food Service**

Department Head: David Dziki

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

S. Heinrich said the Food Service Department is a self-supporting fund. He said the Department has to follow a variety of federal regulations regarding foods served. He indicated the major purchase proposed in the budget was four specialty tables for the different kitchens. J. Hanson said that the proposed budget also includes counter tops to hold chilled foods. Otherwise, he said the budget was basically flat.

D. Dziki told the Committee that the cost of lunches was \$2.50 at the elementary schools and \$2.75 at the middle and high schools. He said the Department also offers a premium meal at the high school for \$3.25. D.Dziki said the last time lunch prices were increased was three years ago due to a new federal law that the average cost of lunches has to be greater than the free or reduced reimbursement rate. He said the District may need to increase lunch prices for 2018-19 school year. Increasing the cost of lunches does not affect the appropriation, but it may increase revenue; however, higher costs may mean that fewer students buy lunch. In addition, by law, any excess Food Service revenue stays with the food service program and must be used for the food service program.

Discussion included the following

- There are federal guidelines regarding the foods that the program offers which cover such issues as use of whole grains, smart snacks, calorie count limits, sodium levels and amounts of fruits and vegetables that must be served.
- The purchase last year of a newer van to be used in food delivery has resulted in a reduction in the amount proposed for vehicle repair. The amount budgeted does cover inspection costs.

### **Special Services**

Department Head: John Fabrizio

Committee Liaisons: D. Illg, N. Schoenfeld, H. Gage

J. Fabrizio told the Committee that the proposed 2017-18 budget was up 3.5 percent. He said the Special Services budget is built based on specific student needs and following federal laws that require a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. He said that some student are educated in Merrimack schools, some have out of district placement and some have residential placements – but the decisions about placement and programming are made by the IEP teams. He indicated that funds are being proposed for the fourth of a five year plan to to install split air systems to control room temperature for students with temperature issues. He said that in the past portable units had been used to meet this need, but these units require a lot of maintenance, are not hooked up to temperature regulatory systems and are not efficient. He noted that annual special education costs per school fluctuate as students move through the different schools. He also said that there were funds to replace the ten year old van that is used to provide transportation to job sites for students in the high school transition program.

D. Illg told the Committee that one of the difficult things about the Special Education budget is predicting future student needs. In addition, he said that the district is now required to provide equal access to extracurricular activities for special education students, so there are some new

budget lines to provide personnel to support students during after school activities. He also said that the state and federal government do not always provide 100% of the funding they are expected to provide.

Discussion included the following:

- The District has a partnership program for autism students that is housed at Reeds Ferry School. As a result, this school has more para-educators than other schools.

### **Library/Media Services**

Department Head: N. Rose

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

J. Hanson reported that the proposed budget was basically flat. He said the driving costs in the budget are software licenses and several items that were deferred when the default budget passed. He said the Department had prioritized purchases under the default budget to keep current on research items, but had cut back on some databases. He said the proposed budget included additional equipment and more interactive technology items.

N. Rose told the Committee that the proposed budget includes funding as indicated in the C.I.P. toward getting projectors in every educational space and replacing infrastructure. She said a side benefit of newer equipment was reduced support and repair costs.

Discussion included the following:

- Areas impacted by passage of the default budget included staff periodicals and reluctant reader materials. Purchase of computers was not impacted.
- Having 2 technicians for 1700 computers is way below industry standard, but the Department is making it work. If more technology is added, there will be a need for additional staff and more training.
- Costs for new computers have gone down.

### **Maintenance**

Tom Tousseau, and Business Administrator M. Shevenell

Committee Liaisons: J. Guagliumi, K. Bobbitt, N. Schoenfeld and S. Heinrich.

J. Guagliumi reported that this Department works hard to repair and maintain the District facilities and equipment. He indicated that the budget contains replacement of the HVAC/heat wheel at the high school that was deferred when the default budget passed. He said the unit is rusting from the inside out and can't be deferred any longer. He said the roof replacement proposed for Thorntons Ferry School is part of the roof replacement plan. He noted that over 47% of the school roofs are out of warranty but that the replacement roofs will have 35 year warranties which will help the District plan and save for future roof replacement. He said the Maintenance Department has a solid plan to help project gas, oil and water needs and costs. He noted that the budget line for track repairs is down because the District has a new track.

T. Tousseau deferred comment to M. Shevenell who gave a Power Point presentation on some major projects there are included in the proposed budget. The presentation covered the replacing

the HVAC/heat wheel at the high school, replacing sections of the roof at Thorntons Ferry School, re-surfacing the bus loop and a portion of the sidewalk near the main entrance at the high school and replacing the sidewalk at the middle school. Some of the project are in the proposed maintenance budget and others will in warrant articles.

Discussion included the following:

- Preparatory work for installation of a new heat wheel was done when that section of the high school was replaced.
- The bus loop and the heat wheel are in the operating budget.
- The current heat wheel was installed in 1977 and it not up to current code.
- The paving and high school sidewalk replacement will be in a warrant article.
- There is a new line in the budget for concrete maintenance.
- The counter tops and cabinets at the high school that were on the School Board “cut” list will be part of the asbestos removal warrant article.
- The School Board decided to request 5 of the 10 requested security cameras this year and request the other 5 next year.
- Oher items (sink bases and cafeteria tables at Masticola Elementary, basketball hoops at Reeds Ferry) that were on the “cut list” will be put in next year’s budget.
- The sinks might be considered a safety issue, the cafeteria tables are not.
- The asbestos removal project was put in a warrant article to keep proposed budget below the default. Spreading this last project over two years in order to put it into the operating budget may not be cost effective.
- A concern was raised about hiring new maintenance workers at entry level rather than hiring and paying for specialists like electricians, plumbers, etc.

S. Heinrich called for a 10 minute recess at 8:40 P.M.

The meeting resumed at 8:50 PM

**District-Wide**

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

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

S. Heinrich reported that the total proposed budget, while under the default, is up 1.9%. He said the major expenses driving the increase are contractual and the guaranteed maximum health insurance is 9% but it may be less when the rate is actually set. He also said there is a new contract for Special Education transportation and indicated that the Administration felt strongly that the high school heat wheel and the middle school sidewalk should be in the operating budget but the asbestos removal project should be a warrant article.

H. Gage said that most of the budget increase is in areas that the District cannot control.

M. Shevenell told the Committee that more staff is taking advantage of the health insurance “opt-out” incentive and that a new lower cost health insurance option will be offered in May. IN

addition, he noted that the bid for the roof replacement came in \$35,000 less than originally budgeted.

Discussion included the following:

- The School Board should consider holding meetings at each of the schools as has been done in the past.
- The default budget will be explained at the work session, but is about \$60,000 higher than the budget as currently proposed.
- About 100 staff take advantage of the undergraduate/graduate reimbursement incentive.

### **Public Participation**

There were no public participation.

### **Next Meeting Schedule**

S. Heinrich reminded the members that the next meeting was held on Thursday, February 2, 2017 and that the work session would be held on February 7<sup>th</sup> with a snow date of February 9<sup>th</sup>. He said that warrant articles would be reviewed during the work session as well. He said that the Committee could make changes to the proposed operating budget, but could not change any of the warrant articles and the Committee would take a vote to recommend, or not, any monied warrant articles. Finally, S. Heinrich indicated that there would be a Public Hearing on February 14<sup>th</sup> at the Masticola Elementary School Elementary All-Purpose Room after which the Committee would take any final actions to recommend.

C. Lang left the meeting at 9:09 P.M.

K. Bobbitt made a MOTION to adjourn. Second: J. Hanson. MOTION PASSED unanimously.

S. Heinrich adjourned the meeting at 9:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Heinrich