

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

BUDGET WORKSHOP

Thursday, January 13, 2022

6:00 p.m.

Lincoln Center/Virtual

PRESENT: Eisenthal, Kohls, Mix, Ntem-mensah, Orsene, Patterson, Stefanovicz

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent of Schools Geary, Deputy Superintendent Curriculum & Special Services Radikas, Director of Finance & Management Clancy

ABSENT: Meggers, Pattacini

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. by Tracey Patterson, Acting Chairperson.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ms. Patterson led everyone in the pledge of allegiance.

C. SUPERINTENDENT'S DRAFT BUDGET PRESENTATION

Mr. Geary reviewed the Board of Education proposed budget for the 2022-2023 school year. He noted that it is no longer the goal of a student to be in one job for 40 years and retire. Today's students need to be flexible learners as they transition from position to position throughout their lives. We need to teach our children the skills necessary to succeed in today's world.

Mr. Geary reviewed the budget workshop dates. This evening he presents the recommended budget. Next Thursday, January 20, he will give details on Salaries, Benefits and Grants. At the regular Board meeting Monday, January 24, he will discuss purchased professional services, contracted services as well as other purchased services. At the last scheduled budget workshop on Thursday, January 27, utilities and supplies will be discussed.

As he does with most presentations, Mr. Geary reviewed the mission of Manchester Public Schools, which is to engage **all** students in the highest quality 21st century education preschool through graduation. Through an active

partnership with students, school personnel, families and community, the Manchester Public Schools will create safe, inclusive schools where equity is the norm and excellence is the goal. All students will be prepared to be lifelong learners and contributing members of society.

Mr. Geary reviewed the student profiles of our students as well as our goals. Budget priorities were outlined, which include:

- Ensure wages allow for adequate staffing at all schools that ensures:
 - additional individual and small group intervention and acceleration needed as a result of lost learning time
 - flexible times and spaces to support interventions and acceleration within and outside the traditional school day
 - support for students who are struggling socially, emotionally and/or behaviorally
- Support resources needed to prioritize curriculum standards in preparation for the 22-23 SY
- Ensure necessary instructional resources and materials, including appropriate technology, are in place to support teaching and learning equitably across the district
- Support the health and wellness of all MPS faculty, staff, students and families
- Ensure necessary resources are available to support strategic recruitment and retention of candidates representative of student demographics of MPS.
- Provide resources to continue race and equity work through professional learning, reflective practice and curriculum development

We are an Alliance District. Alliance districts serve 42% of Connecticut's children, which includes 65% of CT's low income students; 76% of CT's EL learners; and 63% of CT's students of color.

Mr. Geary reviewed the last several years' budgets, noting the highest increase in the last 7 years was 2.8%. He reviewed the economic impact of the pandemic, including staffing shortages, rising wages, supply chain issues and inflation. He also reviewed the expected grant funding and relief packages from the government. Mr. Geary reminded us that last year we were able to save just under \$2million in a non-lapsing account. We need to start shifting things around long-term to avoid a funding cliff.

Mr. Geary explained for the benefit of the newer Board members that grants and federal funding help us maintain a reasonable budget. Federal funds cannot be used to supplant town funds, only to supplement them. He explained that MBR = minimum budget requirements. If the town does not approve the MBR they are fined.

When looking at account numbers in the budget the object code represents the categories (such as certified salaries, instructional supplies, etc.). Location codes indicate where the activity takes place (ie a school, central office, a magnet school). Program codes are essentially departments (ie Language Arts, Math).

For the 2022-2023 school year the superintendent recommends a budget of \$122,422,774.93. This represents a proposed budget increase of \$4,648,600.93 over last year's adopted budget of \$117,774,174.00. This is a proposed increase of 3.95%.

Key cost drivers to this budget include contractual obligations in salaries for certified and non-certified staff, health insurance costs, special education tuition and related services for magnets and out of district placements, and transportation.

Mr. Geary again gave the dates of the next several budget workshops and what would be reviewed each one. He stated that we may approve the budget at our regular meeting on February 3rd, but we have until February 14th to approve it if we need more time.

Ms. Stefanovicz wanted to make clear that it costs more than \$122,422,774.93 to run our districts, as many costs are covered by grants and federal funding. She reminded us that as an Alliance District we are one of 33 districts out of 169 in CT that provide for 65% of CT's low income families, 76% of EL families and 63% of CT's families of color.

Regarding the potential salary increase to attract and retain talent, Ms. Stefanovicz would like more information. Mr. Geary suggested providing the DRG reference group to compare salaries. He will provide that at the next meeting.

Ms. Stefanovicz asked about the policy on capital repairs being a percentage of the budget. Mr. Geary stated it would not be wise to use the money we saved last year to supplement that line.

Mr. Kohls was overwhelmed by the amount of information presented. He asked about a list of positions and salaries. Mr. Geary explained that details on that would be presented at the next meeting. Mr. Kohls also wondered if we get Alliance funding every year. Mr. Geary stated we do currently. Mr. Kohls wondered about a monitoring system to see if the things we are spending the Alliance money on are achieving the goals we need. Mr. Geary explained that we both internally monitor programming as well as the state, who has an Alliance tracker. There is also an outside program evaluator used.

Mr. Eisenthal felt this was a good overview of the budget. He wondered why our health insurance costs are only rising 4% when many places are seeing a

much higher increase. Mr. Geary explained that we provide trend analysis detail and this budget line can swing wildly. When we replace veteran employees who retire with younger adults it is often the case that we drop from a family plan for medical coverage to a single plan. This saves us thousands of dollars. The Town is self-insured and has a healthy TOMIF fund, which we will go into another time. Mrs. Clancy also noted that in recent years we were able to move all bargaining units to a high deductible plan, which costs much less than traditional insurance.

Ms. Patterson loved the perspective given about being an Alliance District, as she gets questions about it. Regarding efforts to attract and retain staff, she agrees with Ms. Stefanovicz. She wondered how we get to a number we feel will attract talent. Mr. Geary reviewed the teachers contract ends at the end of 22-23. Currently we are in negotiations with security/hall monitors and Behavior Techs, whose contracts expired at the end of 19-20. These groups combined unions and changed affiliations. They had not had a raise in a while so they were back-paid a 2.75% raise for the 20-21 school year. We are hoping for a 5 year contract. The paraprofessional contract ends at the end of this year. Usually we budget about a 2% raise, but comparing us to other districts regionally, we are on the low end of the pay scale.

D. Public Participation

None.

E. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracey Patterson
Acting Board Secretary