

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

BUDGET WORKSHOP

Wednesday, January 23, 2019

6:00 p.m.

Manchester High School – Room 293

PRESENT: Conyers, Hagenow, Hughes, Maio, Pattacini, Scappaticci,

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

ABSENT: Meggers, Stefanovicz, Thames

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Christopher Pattacini, acting co-chair of the Personnel & Finance Committee.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Ms. Hagenow, co-chair of the Personnel & Finance Committee.

C. OPENING REMARKS

Ms. Hagenow explained that this is a budget workshop and the conversation about the budget would continue. Last week's workshop was cancelled, but last evening at the Board meeting the budget meeting was about salaries and this evening the topic is supplies and materials.

Mr. Pattacini noted that the administration will also present guidance around possible cuts to the budget. The next Board meeting will be held February 11th and it is expected that the budget proposal is approved at that meeting prior to sending the budget proposal to the Town by February 14th.

D. SUPERINTENDENT'S BUDGET PRESENTATION

Mr. Geary briefly reviewed the instructional supplies budget, which is a specific per pupil amount given to each school. He also reviewed the capital repairs, capital projects, maintenance and custodial supplies budget, all of which are specific percentages of the overall budget, so those numbers are fluid right now.

Next, Mr. Geary reviewed the first set of potential cuts to the proposed budget, which would bring the overall requested increase down to 3.62% from 4.8%. Mr. Geary noted that no jobs will be lost with these cuts, just positions will not be filled with retirements and vacancies and people currently in these positions will be moved into other positions with the close of Washington.

Position	Savings	Impact
Reduce 2.0 Library Media Specialist	\$120,000	No split LMS between Waddell and Verplanck; Do not fill retirement at Bennet. Less support for technology in classroom.
Reading Consultant	\$65,000	Do not redeploy from Washington
Social Worker	\$65,000	Do not redeploy from Washington
Special Education Teacher	\$65,000	Do not redeploy from Washington
Assistant Principal	\$120,000	Move position to Grant
Reduce 2.0 Elementary Classroom teachers	\$130,000	Increase class size at 3 grade levels in elementary schools
Eliminate 1 Custodian at MMA	\$55,000	Move MMA to Robertson
Eliminate 3 Paras at Washington	\$60,000	Do not redeploy 3 paras from Washington
Reduce 10 Vacant Business Ed Position at MHS	\$65,000	Eliminate Personal Finance Graduation Requirement
Reduce Instructional Tutors	\$100,000	Reduce 6 tutors, less support for students who struggle academically
Reduce Professional Development	\$100,000	Reduce building-based PD
Contracted subs	\$50,000	Reduced due to reduction in PD
Reduce Consultants	\$50,000	Provide Math support for only K-4 or 5-8

Move 3 bargaining units to HSA	\$100-200K TBD	Negotiations pending (this amount is not part of total reduction at this time)
Reduce Instructional supplies	\$100,000	Reduce per pupil spending by \$15 per pupil
Reduce Itinerant Music/Art/PE	\$65,000	Reduce sections for special programs
Elementary Enrichment	\$65,000	Reduce grade 4 enrichment program
Adjustment to Tele Comm & Comm Related Equipment	\$14,287	Adjustment per billing
Reduce Recognition	\$40,000	Eliminate Employee Recognition Program
Reduce Kronos	\$37,000	Eliminate Time Clock
Total reduction	\$1,366,287	(Does not include move to HSA)
New budget request	\$117,510,391 = 3.62%	

Ms. Maio appreciates that Mr. Geary is trying to think ahead but she does not want to increase class size. She does not want any of these reductions as we need everything on this list and nothing here is frivolous.

Mr. Conyers asked about Kronos. Mr. Geary explained that is the time clock system we use that he is happy to get rid of. We already pay for Munis, which has a self-reporting system that we are looking into using.

Mr. Conyers asked about the move to Robertson for MMA. Mr. Geary noted the reduction in rental cost is already in the budget and the move provides a gym and art area, along with more space, for the growing school. It also allows for another year until a more permanent plan is implemented for the new school.

Mr. Conyers echoed Ms. Maio in that he does not want to see class sizes rise. He also does not want the graduation requirement of Personal Finance removed. As for reducing the per pupil spending, we are always short there already.

Mr. Pattacini noted that there are a few items on this list that do not directly impact the kids, such as ending the recognition program, removing Kronos, and

adjusting the tele comm line. Those are not unreasonable. As for the MMA custodian he asked for more details. Mr. Geary noted that with the new school two staff were added to support the building and one of those was going to move into a painter position, this would eliminate that. Mr. Pattacini feels it is unlikely that a 4.8% increase will be approved and he understands the fiscal challenges the community faces.

Mr. Pattacini noted that if the Assistant Principal position is moved from the Board budget to the Alliance budget, there would then need to be a reduction of \$120,000 worth of items from Alliance. Mr. Geary agreed, noting that would probably impact classroom libraries.

Mr. Pattacini noted the reduction of Kronos, recognition, and tele comm are the first things he is okay with reducing. The move to HSA for the three bargaining units and reduction of a custodian are next. These don't seem to impact the classroom. As for reducing instructional supplies, he noted that parents and teachers are already spending their own money and that reduction would directly impact students. Mr. Pattacini feels the rest of the reduction list impacts the students that we are trying to help the most.

Ms. Hagenow wondered how professional development is being reduced. Mr. Geary noted that the budget line would be reduced from \$250,000 to \$150,000. There would be less money available to send staff to conferences and to have guest speakers. However, there is grant funding from Nellie Mae around supporting equity work that could make up for some of this reduction.

Ms. Hagenow was uncomfortable reducing tutors and paras when we were recently discussing the increased need for these people to assist children in need. Reducing this support staff would hinder the growth of those children who need extra help the most.

Mr. Scappaticci is comfortable with a 4.8% increase and echoed Mr. Conyers comment from the night prior, that we are trying to make up for years of not getting what we needed. He wondered how we impress upon the Board of Directors the gravity of the situation. Do we share with them this initial list of potential reductions and tell them the next list of cuts will have an even worse impact on our students? Mr. Scappaticci recommends that all Board members reach out to their Board of Directors "buddy" and share with them this information directly

Dr. Radikas noted her mom says that when you want something you need to pay for it.

Mr. Scappaticci noted he does not want to eliminate the graduation requirement as we just voted to add that two years ago.

Mr. Hughes supports the 4.8% increase, though he agrees we could take a few of the items from this list. However, he prefers to keep the recognition program as it is valuable to recognize good work.

Mr. Geary reminded the Board that the Board of Directors is not just looking at the Education budget, but they have many lists to accommodate. Mr. Geary noted that the next list of potential reductions will be more painful and he noted that the most impactful reductions from this list seem to be class size, graduation requirement and instructional supplies.

Mr. Conyers clarified that he sees the 4.8% increase as a correction to past funding, noting that with that increase the average over the last six years would be 2.7%. He is more comfortable with a 3.62% increase, which would make that six year average 1.97%.

Mr. Geary implored the Board to be thoughtful about what they are ready to approve.

Ms. Maio appreciates where Mr. Geary is coming from, but the Board of Directors put us in this position due to years of low increases. She wondered what we are supposed to do when they give us another small increase and then special education costs rise, transportation costs go over budget, etc. We have no wiggle room even before cutting anything. We cannot thrive on less than 4.8%. Ms. Maio feels it is her job to advocate for the students of Manchester and the majority of this list of potential reductions are necessary items.

Mr. Geary noted that many of the items on this list have a limited impact on students. When you look at the town budget, you are asking a community member to choose between a police officer and a 7th library media specialist. We must weigh all the information and be thoughtful. Ms. Maio disagreed, noting it is the Board of Director's job to allocate the budget and it is our job to advocate for the children. We need to ask for what we need, not just what we think we can get. As for reaching out to the Directors, that has not worked in the past.

Ms. Hagenow recalled that in the fall we provided the town with a list of current services roll-over and she wondered what the percentage increase of that was. Mr. Geary noted that was 5.2%. With that being said, Ms. Hagenow feels 4.8% is not unreasonable when it would take 5.2% to simply keep the current services at the same level.

Mr. Pattacini notes we will not get a 5.2 or even a 4.8% increase. It would be helpful, he feels, to get feedback from the General Manager or Board of Directors sooner than later. He has prioritized the current potential reduction list into

three categories, the one he mentioned above that he has no issue cutting, the one that he absolutely does not want to cut and then the one that he can see cutting if we need to. Mr. Pattacini feels that in reality we will get less than a 3.62% increase. Mr. Geary noted that it would be difficult for the General Manager to provide early feedback as he does not yet know what the state budget is and what the revenue to the town will be. Connecticut is in a fiscal jam.

Ms. Hagenow wondered if it would be to our advantage or disadvantage to show them where we are at. They already know we need 5.2% to stay at our current levels, so if we present them with 4.8% they will make a decision and we will have to make cuts regardless.

Mr. Geary noted that the General Manager has historically been fair to education on his own recommended budget. That is the middle step in all this, the General Manager presents his budget based on what he feels the town can afford, then the Board of Directors decides on a final budget.

Ms. Maio agreed that the Town Manager does an excellent job and tries to be fair to everyone. It makes her angry that he is reasonable and puts in his budget what he thinks the town can afford and then the Directors make significant cuts. The Board of Directors, Ms. Maio feels, do not put enough faith in the General Manager and listen to him.

Mr. Hughes still prefers to take just the small reductions mentioned earlier and submit that to the town (close to 4.8%)

Mr. Pattacini noted we need to reach out to the Board of Directors individually. He wondered if we need another budget workshop or if we will be ready to approve a recommended budget at the next Board meeting February 11th. Mr. Geary noted that he will come to that meeting with multiple options. Mr. Pattacini noted that if Board members have further suggestions to reach out to the Superintendent prior to the next meeting.

E. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

F. CLOSING COMMENTS

Ms. Hagenow reviewed that the General Manager has to make tough decisions about what he feels the town can fund and he has been fair in the past. The Board of Directors knows we need a 5.2% increase just to stay at current levels, so asking for a 4.8% increase seems fair. She is not yet in agreement with 3.6%.

G. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 p.m. (Scappaticci/Hagenow - Vote 6/0)

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Pattacini
Board Secretary