



## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

### **BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES March 6, 2018**

<b>Meeting:</b>	School Committee
<b>Date:</b>	March 6, 2018
<b>Location:</b>	MERHS Library
<b>Attendees:</b>	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Avi Urbas, Director of Finance Ann Cameron, Chairman Julie Riordan, Co-Chairman Shannon Erdmann Sarah Wolf Rachel Fitzgibbon Ken Warnock
<b>Absent:</b>	Caroline Weld
<b>Guests:</b>	
<b>Recorded by:</b>	Gail Hunter

#### **A. Call to Order**

Ms. Cameron called the School Committee Business Meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and thanked Cape Ann TV for recording the meeting.

#### **B. Business Meeting Open Session**

1) **Public Comment** – A question regarding Health Insurance from Ms. Palermo a Manchester resident: she asked if the increase was a Town contribution increase or an increase for insured and if eligible participants were surveyed to determine their eligibility.

Mr. Urbas indicated the contribution rate for employees had not changed since 2016 and that the rate applied to the District overall. Mr. Urbas indicated that eligibility is managed by Tufts.

Ms. Palermo indicated that Tufts was, most likely, not highly committed to determining eligibility. She indicated her employer saved significant money by asking for proof of relationship to the employee when signing up new members to health insurance.

Mr. Urbas stated that was an excellent point and he would follow up with Tufts.

2) **Student Report** – There was no student report this evening.

3) **Chairman's Report** – Ms. Cameron did not have a report for this evening.

4) **Consent Agenda:**

- Acceptance of Warrants
- Minutes 2/6/18 & 2/13/18

*Ms. Wolf moved to approve the **Consent Agenda**, Ms. Erdmann seconded the motion. The motion passed 4 approving, 0 against and 2 abstaining. Mr. Warnock and Ms. Riordan were not at the 2/6/18 meeting.*

Ms. Erdmann had a question on the warrant regarding the increase in legal fees; stating the fees appeared to be roughly doubled from what was forecast. Superintendent Beaudoin answered the question, indicating the increase was due to requests for student records. The requests were coming under Student Services and Special Education.

Superintendent Beaudoin asked Mr. Urbas to itemize the invoice. The typical expenses were in the normal range; with the additional expenses for review and redaction of student records requested resulting in the increase.

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated the District, as a public entity, was under the Attorney General's Freedom of Information Act. The student records were pulled in District and forwarded to lawyers for redaction. The district is following the lawyer's advice for requests and compliance within 10 days.

According to Superintendent Beaudoin, the level of requests is a new phenomenon. Unfortunately recovering costs for multiple requests is capped at five cents a page and \$25.00 an hour. The District will follow up with the Attorney General's Office and the Supervisor of Records for additional direction and guidance in dealing with requests and information on how other Districts are addressing the challenge.

Ms. Cameron asked if this was being done to create an onerous situation and if there was any recourse? Mr. Urbas indicated the motive for the requests were not the District's concern. The policy was carved out for protection and confidentiality. Asking for help from the Attorney General's Office is the next step and he will follow up.

## 5) Sub-Committee Reports:

### **Elementary Facilities** (Ms. Weld and Ms. Cameron)

Ms. Cameron stated the sub-committee prepared to go before MSBA on Wednesday, March 14, 2018 to address the PSR for Memorial Elementary School Building.

The Building Committee approved Construction Manager at Risk as the building supervisory model. Despite attempts to recruit a committee member to defend Design Bid Build no member was willing to take the position.

The choice between CM at Risk or Design Bid Build – the Committee choose CM at Risk for the following reasons: with this model the Manager owns the project, is committed to a delivery date and price. CM at Risk is a qualifications-based approach while Design Bid Build is a bid approach. Mr. Urbas indicated this model's goal is to maintain a reputation for tight management and efficiency. Ms. Cameron and the Building Committee believe CM at Risk is more of an advocacy model and a better choice for the new Memorial School.

The Building Committee voted 100% to support CM at Risk.

*Motion to approve the Building Committee's recommendation to hire **CM at Risk** as the Memorial School Building supervisory model was made by Ms. Erdmann and seconded by Ms. Riordan. The motion passed unanimously 6 in favor and 0 opposed.*

### **Finance Committee** (Ms. Cameron and Ms. Erdmann)

Ms. Erdmann stated the Finance Sub-Committee had a collaborative meeting on Monday, March 5, 2018 and focused on planning the next All Boards summit scheduled for Wednesday, March 21, 2018 the summit will cover capital items and the impact these items have on the Towns long-range planning models.

Additionally, the meeting addressed the Memorial School Building Project, reconstruction of the Bridge and Parks & Recreation Department space needs in the new Memorial School.

Mr. Federspiel, Town Administrator and Ms. Marshall, Director Parks and Recreation Department (MBTS) will work together to define space needs. The group also discussed safety, health & community and committed to developing the Y as a resource.

### **Communication/Policy Committee** (Ms. Fitzgibbon and Mr. Warnock)

No additional meetings since the sub-committee last met.

### **Negotiation Team** (Ms. Wolf and Ms. Riordan)

Ms. Wolf indicated the first negotiation meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, March 14, 2018.

## 6) Superintendent's Report –

Safety has been at the forefront of the District and Towns focus for some time but heightened since the Parkland, FL tragedy. District Directors, Principals, Administration, Fire and Police Chiefs and Emergency Management Leaders meet regularly (December, April and August) to review and plan.

In 2015 the group started reviewing ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate) training. ALICE is a list of options that can be used to stay safe in the event of an intruder. Some may choose to evacuate, and some may choose to lockdown and barricade. ALICE training is about options. Not every situation is the same.

New Police and Fire Chiefs were hired by Manchester in 2017. The District evacuation plans were reviewed, and the off-site location moved from the Church on Lincoln Street to the Essex Country Club. Additional planning and consideration was given to special needs students and all adults in District buildings.

Training with teachers and students has followed with classroom presentations in advance of evacuation exercises. The High School faculty and students are more confident in the process with the Middle School faculty less confident. Additional preparations are planned for Middle School faculty and students. The Elementary students train with a “stay put” announcement “squirrel in the building”.

Ms. Erdmann stated it was important for the District to plan trainings twice a year with students and staff engaged. Situations are changing and communication between staff and parents is essential, Superintendent Beaudoin agreed.

Additional safety concerns include: School Resource Officer, barricades at front of buildings, hardware, the amount of glass in the library and lockdown during the school day. Superintendent Beaudoin indicated in some ways we may over prepare for an event that is less likely to happen than for one that may happen. However, options and discussions on all possible events are reviewed.

Ms. Cameron asked about the term “hardening” and exactly what does that mean. Ms. Riordan mentioned the students from Parkland, FL who made a point of not turning schools into prisons. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the District uses a computer app called Crisis Manager to communicate with staff and outside resources in the event of an emergency. Police have access to live feeds from the schools in cruisers and at the Police Department.

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated the work the District is doing with Social and Emotional support programs will continue. Thorough kindness the District will help build the capacity for students to cope and manage and ultimately feel safe and more empowered. Superintendent Beaudoin also stated the Administration encourages people to bring their safety concerns forward. Superintendent Beaudoin and Ms. Cameron assured the Committee every building in the District is being reviewed for safety.

**National School Walk Out:** The students will manage this event and plan to leave the building for 17 minutes and gather on the field to honor each of the Parkland victims. Teachers will support and coach the students.

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated there is a political aspect to the event and it is essential to respect different views and the District needs to find the just right solution while respecting different stands on the National School Walk Out.

7) **New Business** – included in discussion below.

8) **Continued Business** –

- FY 19 Budget
  - Update

Phase I of the budget process prepare and present District Budget to the Towns – completed.

Phase II of the budget process identify \$250K in budget decreases through restructuring or cuts was scheduled for this evening's agenda.

Initial Phase II cuts proposed: eliminating Elementary Foreign Language and rolling back 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Foreign Language to .6.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated while on break news came in regarding Heath Care costs to the District. It was revealed that the monthly and bi-monthly lag through October 2017 which provides 5 or 6 months of insurance data contained favorable results.

Mr. Urbas through ongoing negotiations with the District's Insurance Broker (USI) and Tufts successfully established a new renewal rate. This the result of 5 months of good news measured against the 19 months of terrible news. Mr. Urbas pointed out the District had originally assumed a 16% increase in the cost of Health Insurance which had been reduced to 14% in the proposed budget. The actual increase is now 10% due to the favorable trend of District claims. The result; \$150K will be returned to the budget. Mr. Urbas pointed out the District is still below level services; however, this is good news and hopefully the good news will continue.

Ms. Cameron asked if the Committee would be asked to identify an additional \$100K in cuts.

Superintendent Beaudoin, stated no. Plans were developed to consolidate the Bridge Program and Academic Center, this allowed for hiring one direct position for the consolidated program and a science hire. Superintendent Beaudoin went onto say – Enrollment issues at the High School are out-of-the-woods, Memorial School reduction in one classroom and retirement of a Librarian with new shared responsibilities between Memorial and Essex Elementary Schools successfully addressed the \$100K shortfall.

Mr. Urbas indicated the 10% Health Insurance Premium may go down further.

- Continued Discussion of Options for Unmet Needs

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated middle tier cuts will be reviewed and if funds become available programs will be added to 2018-2019 academic year. Ms. Erdmann stated she would like to see Boot-Camp as the first add back. Ms. Cameron stated she thought it was important to add the Late-Bus because it directly impacts students from Essex.

Ms. Riordan asked for further discussion on the middle tier cuts to be added to the agenda for March 20<sup>th</sup> with the Committee identifying a priority list for programs returning. Superintendent Beaudoin agreed.

The Committee discussed possible curriculum changes a result of decisions made while considering cuts:

- Ms. Cameron asked is Foreign Language was more essential than Coding or Technology – as related to 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills coming out of High School.
- Mr. Warnock agreed and asked if we're reviewing elective use of funds is there something more relevant or appropriate to consider.
- Superintendent Beaudoin stated she was happy to have that conversation and for the Committee to review electives – there are lots of options.

Ms. Slade from Manchester asked if the District was being too optimistic regarding decrease in Health Insurance Premiums. Mr. Urbas walked through the process and explained the 70 – 30 ratios for insurance rates and assured Ms. Slade the rates would not go up and may likely go down; assuming no catastrophic incidents occurred.

Mr. Clark from Manchester asked how the Essex staff retirement would work. Superintendent Beaudoin responded by explaining at the beginning of the budgeting process the District had developed a Zero-Based Budget and was aware there were areas where staffing could be decreased due to shifts in the student populations. The decision was to have 3 people work together to cover technical services and libraries in the Elementary Schools.

Ms. Slade asked about safety for the new Memorial School. Superintendent Beaudoin stated it was a requirement working with MSBA to have a comprehensive safety plan for new buildings. MSBA works with experts to assure the Buildings meet all current safety requirements.

Ms. Palermo asked about the possibility of Tufts Health making an across the board 20% increase for all subscribers. Mr. Urbas stated he works with a broker, knows the data on what the District paid in and claims – he would move to another provider.

Ms. Palermo stated her safety concern was the incidences in schools happened with known people. She wondered if the climate in the school to people with differences was open enough. Ms. Cameron indicated building social emotional health, identifying problems and supporting students was a priority of the School Committee. Ms. Riordan stated the Committee talks about it a lot and reiterated building inclusiveness was a priority.

- School Choice 2018-2019 – Preliminary

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated 12 School Choice students were leaving this year. The District would like to place 12 new School Choice students. Memorial School dropped one class, new placements at Memorial was not an option. Middle School and High School are also at capacity. Leaving Essex Elementary to absorb the new School Choice students. Superintendent Beaudoin's initial recommendation is 2 School Choice students per grade level. However, the District will wait to see how the Kindergarten enrollment numbers play out.

- 2018-2019 Calendar – First Read

Committee reviewed the 2018-2019 calendar addressing best possible parent conference days, early release and professional development days.

- Mr. Urbas had two additional notes prior to adjournment:

Budget apportionment changes: Manchester is 3.34% of the District budget and Essex is 3.2%. A narrowing of the share between 2 Towns.

Bridge update: there were 2 bidders at \$120K, a conference call is scheduled with Insurance Co. and designer to review what is included and to complete the work before graduation.

Superintendent Beaudoin mentioned the Director of DESE, LGBTQ program is working with the District leadership team on a few cases. He is a positive and uplifting person who starts his meetings with a gratitude practice. Which provides the group with an opportunity to reflect on something good. Superintendent Beaudoin is proposing the School Committee may like to initiate the practice for their meetings. The idea was presented as something to think about.

Mr. Warnock indicated this was also how RULER started their meetings.

## **D. Adjourn**

*Mr. Warnock moved to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Riordan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Hunter