



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES December 5, 2019

Meeting:	School Committee
Date:	December 5, 2019
Location:	MERMHS Learning Commons
Attendees:	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Avi Urbas, Director of Finance Shannon Erdmann, Chairperson Rachel Fitzgibbon Eric Bourke Sarah Wolf
Absent:	Ken Warnock, Caroline Weld, Ann Cameron
Guests:	Jenai Cohen, MD, 5 th Grade Committee
Recorded by:	Gail Hunter

AGENDA

A. Call to Order – Ms. Erdmann called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

B. Business Meeting Open Session

- 1) **Public Comment** – There was no public comment this evening.
- 2) **Chairman's Report** – Ms. Erdmann stated she had enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving and hoped all present had also.
- 3) **Consent Agenda**
 - Acceptance of Warrants
 - Budget Transfers (Approved under separate motion.)
 - Minutes 11/19/19

- Approval of Out of State Travel (No out of State Travel to approve.)

Ms. Fitzgibbon asked about flowers for seniors and which account line the flowers were paid from. Mr. Urbas confirmed the flowers were covered by the line item senior athletics.

Ms. Wolf moved to approve the Consent Agenda; Ms. Fitzgibbon seconded the motion. The motion passed with noted unanimously.

4) Sub-Committee Reports

- **Elementary Facilities/MSBC Sub-Committee** (Ms. Weld and Ms. Cameron) – Report

Superintendent Beaudoin reported the presentation to Memorial School students by WT Rich's project management team was well received by the students and staff. She stated the team did a fantastic job, the presentation included architects, site workers (wearing hard hats) as well as the WT Rich management team led by John Rich. The students were fully engaged and especially liked the animation video of an avatar like student running through the new building and the drone overview of the construction project.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated to date there has been only one neighborhood issue. Lights were left on all night and neighbors unhappy. The issue has been addressed lights will be turned off at the end of afternoon and evening work. The project continues to be on time and on budget.

- **Finance Sub-Committee** (Ms. Cameron and Ms. Erdmann) – Report

Ms. Erdmann reported on the most recent collaboration meeting. Regionalization was discussed with focus on three possible areas of working regionally: Facilities, Human Resources and Technology. Further discussions will review and develop possibilities of collaboration with the Towns and neighboring communities.

Mr. Urbas stated the National Grid Easement was discussed and has been signed. The project has been fully permitted by the MBTS Conservation Commission and Planning Board. WT Rich did an excellent job addressing Board of Selectmen's questions.

- **Policy/Communication Sub-Committee** (Ms. Fitzgibbon and Mr. Bourke) – No Report
- **Negotiation Team** (Ms. Wolf and Mr. Warnock) – No Report

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the final contract document is ready for the School Committee members to sign. There were several editing steps with the document passed back and forth between the Teacher's Association and Administration which is part of the final process.

5) Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Beaudoin mentioned that the MERHS Chorus had performed with the Cape Ann Symphony and received accolades from members of the community. She is especially proud of

their accomplishments. The Cappello group will be performing throughout local communities in the coming weeks and is also very popular. MERHS Concert is scheduled for December 12th with the Elementary Concert scheduled for December 19th. The Middle School Concert will take place in mid-January. A new parent group entitled Manchester Essex Friends of the Performing Arts has been formed to support the arts in the District which is great news!

- Grades 5 and 8 Field Trip Planning Update

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the **5th Grade Coming Together** trip for spring 2020 Proposal is being presented to the Committee this evening. The 5th Grade Committee included teachers and community members. Their mission: Reach out our HEARTs to build character, strengthen our community and grow together. The Committee defined their goals:

- To create an inclusive and common experience that students can carry into 6th grade and throughout their career at MERMS and MERHS
- Integrate students from EES and MMES and plant the seed for friendships
- Foster a growth mindset and promote being your best self
- Cultivate respect for self, respect for community and respect for nature
- Students will enjoy the equivalent of 4 days experience based on collective input from parents, teachers and students.

The proposal included a comprehensive 5th Grade Coming Together Experience Overview – the overview includes days spent in each community to promote friendships and team building, a day at Moraine Farm in Beverly to work on team work and personal growth, a day at Children's Island in Marblehead for collaboration and problem solving and a day at Singing Beach for community service and reflection.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the budget for the proposed 4 days is lower than the previous 5th Grade Coming Together experience. There are several items open for further discussion including lunches and snacks with “sign up genius” for parents to donate healthy snacks for bus rides home, confirmation of schedules, check insurance for ferry ride, confirm bus schedules, discuss availability of nurses, t-shirt design, develop pen-pal program and work out activity groups and size of groups for each activity.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the Committee did a fantastic job. They took up the challenge and made the new event possible. Ms. Erdmann stated the proposal looks awesome recognized and thanked the Committee. Dr. Cohen was present to represent the Committee and stated Superintendent had presented the proposal fully.

Grade 8 Trip Taskforce included teachers, parent PTO members and Principal Maino. The Taskforce surveyed students and parents. Their rationale as proposed: students will have fun while learning more about the great City of New York, advancements in Aeronautical Science, the history of Native Americans in Massachusetts and will even attend a Red Sox game. There are many skills we will practice over the week including: independence, cooperation with a group, historic and scientific habits of mind, social-emotional regulation and navigating a City.

Field Trip Schedule:

- May 28, 2020 – Stem Day: Aeronautical Engineering at Fenway Park and Red Sox Game.
- May 29, 2020 – New York City History and Culture Day: World Strides tour guides will introduce the students to historic Ellis Island, Statue of Liberty, and 9/11 Memorial and culture a premier Broadway Show in Times Square.
- June 1, 2020 – Early Massachusetts History Day: Plimoth Plantation will include guided tours of the plantation and speakers from the Wampanoag Tribe will meet with students.

Superintendent Beaudoin indicated she will follow-up on academic connections, costs and request additional details from the Taskforce. She indicated the 5th Grade Committee and 8th Grade Taskforce addressed the challenge of creating new enrichment experiences for the classes and met the deadline. There is additional work to be done and that will take place soon.

6) Continued Business

- FY 21 Budget
 - FY 20 Review

Budget Transfer 1: Allocation of Initial Budget Reductions the result of the retirement of one full time non-replacement position at \$84K. This represents a cut in program.

Budget Transfer 2: Mid-Year Budget Adjustments move \$16K to operations.

Mr. Urbas stated the District realized a spiked in Out-of-District placements which for FY 20 will be covered with Circuit Breaker reserves, a State reimbursement program. This helps the FY 20 budget but sets up a gap for FY 21.

Mr. Urbas stated the District's good news is Health Insurance is running at 5% renewal not the originally budgeted 8%

Ms. Wolf moved to approve Budget Transfer 1 and Budget Transfer 2 as presented in FY 20 Budget Transfer Request; Mr. Bourke seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- FY 21 Tentative Budget

Budget Goals

- Develop and deliver a fiscally responsible budget that maintains educational quality, support District goals and aligns with our multi-year budget commitment to work within the confines of proposition 2 ½
- Manage Enrollment
 - Strive to meet School Committee class size guidelines
 - Serve increasingly diverse student education needs
- Exercise fiscal responsibility

- Seek internal efficiencies to offset growth needs when possible
- Meet local, state and federal responsibilities while controlling growth

Considerations in Developing FY 21 Budget

- Student Needs – Core Curriculum and Instructional Development (materials and instructional technology), Program Development, Training and Support, Staffing – lass Size and Co-Curricular Activities.
- Special Education – In-District Programs, Out-of-District Placement, Transportation and support Personnel.
- Fixed Costs – Personnel Costs, Insurance (Current and Retiree/OPEB), Utilities and Transportation
- Facilities – Routine Custodial and Maintenance, Essex Elementary Maintenance Capital Planning, MSHS Maintenance Capital Planning and Support Memorial Building Project

FY21 Operating Budget Overview

- Initial goal to provide Level Services at a minimum
 - Maintains same level of program currently in place
 - Essential program changes historically funded via efficiencies/restructuring due to funding constraints, but few new reduction options remain
 - Cuts made between FY 18 – FY 20 have not been restored
- Excluding mandated health insurance and special education tuitions, FY 21 Level Services is affordable within confines of Proposition 2 1/2
 - Annual growth excluding these statutory requirements is 2.98%
- Including all expenses, gap between Level Services and sustainable funding in \$400K+, similar to FY 20 Tentative Budget. Options include:
 - Cost saving opportunities and program reductions
 - Increased Town contributions
 - Use of one-time reserve funding (short-term solution only)

FY 21 Operating Budget Drivers

- Health insurance: \$517K (40%) of spending growth
 - Initial rate increase estimate of 10%, based on Broker input
 - Underwriter's model shows 14% based on claims data, industry inflation trend (7-8%) manual/non-creditable rate and extended time/unknowns prior to spring renewal
 - Savings possible as MERSD's preliminary utilization (through August) is strong/better-than-average. Monitoring monthly. Each 1% reduction in rate = \$43K
- Out-of-District Tuitions: \$138 (10%) of spending growth
 - 16% growth in FY 21, following 42% in FY 20, due to move-ins and four \$100-\$200K residential placements
 - Excluding residential placements, OOD at historic low, due to MERSD's in depth in-District programming

- Savings possible, pending outcome of increased Circuit Breaker (State Aid) funding
- Compensation: \$707K (50%) of spending growth
 - 4.19% growth – in line with multi-year budget model. No new FTE.
 - 2.5% contractual Cost of Living Adjustment (OLA) for FY 20 – FY 22 + 1.6% step/column
 - Saving possible pending retirements. Limited restructuring opportunities remain.

FY 21 Budget Overview

- FY 21 Tentative Operating Budget = \$27.06M
 - 3.83 % (\$998K) spending increase from FY 20 budget
 - Relies upon \$430K of yet-to-be-finalized spending efficiencies/reductions – By contrast, tentative Budget gap was \$900K in FY 19 and \$380K in FY 20
- Preliminary FY 21 Operating Assessment Increase = 3.83%
 - Measures cost increase to Towns after deducting “other revenue” (i.e. State Aid) from spending needs
 - High end of MERSD’s sustainable multi-year budget range – 5-year average assessment increase is just 3.30%, State Aid average increase is 1.7%
- FY 21 Capital Budget = \$4.2 M (down 1.5%)
 - Second year of Memorial School project debt
 - Potential for modest additional savings pending opportunity to refinance 16% of MSHS debt

Budget Highlights: Revenue

- 3.7% growth in non-assessment revenue, in line with spending rate, reducing pressure on Town Assessments.
 - Recent growth has been much lower, but new State Aid program expected in FY 21
 - Increased Regional Transportation aid to \$175K (25%) to reflect recent trend
 - \$55K estimate for new, phased OOD transportation reimbursement
 - Assume only minimum Chapter 70 increase (1.6%) as new aid is targeted to urban districts
 - Assume \$25K decline in School Choice revenue (to \$300K) accounting for large number of graduations.

Staffing Not Included in Tentative Budget Preliminary

- Staffing Accomplished in FY 20 – **Level 1: Health, Safety, Legal, Enrollment**
 - High School – Reinstate 2015 Athletic Director and Assistant Principal Staffing – Athletic Director 60% AD, 40% Teaching, Dean of Students, .4 PE, .4 Foreign Language and .4 Art Teacher
 - District – SRO (after budget/partnership with Towns)
 - Memorial 1.0 Inclusion Specialist
- **Level 2: Best Practices/Expanded Effort** MS IRWL Reading Specialist

Manchester Essex Regionalization Collaboration Opportunities – discussed in Finance Sub Committee report.

7) School Committee Comment – There was no additional School Committee comment.

8) Adjourn

Ms. Wolf moved to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Fitzgibbon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

School Committee Future Meetings

- December 11, 2019
- December 17, 2019