

Rochester Board of Education
Finance Committee
February 13, 2014

Attendance: Commissioner Powell (Chair); Commissioners Cruz and Evans. Parent Representative: Giancarlo Giannini. District Staff: Bill Ansbro, Chief Financial Officer; Vernon Connors, Budget Director; and John Burke, Purchasing. Community Members: Elizabeth Laidlaw, RCSD parent, tutor, and representative of Urban Presbyterians Together.

Commissioner Powell convened the meeting at 7:12PM.

I. Input from Community Member regarding proposed 2014-15 RCSD Budget

Elizabeth Laidlaw discussed the need for additional social workers in the District, with at least one FTE per school building. She noted that Urban Presbyterians Together provides tutoring services to hundreds of RCSD students, most of who are in a heightened state of stress most of the time. Ms. Laidlaw explained that this extreme state of stress has led these students' minds to shut down, rendering them unable to take in or process information.

Ms. Laidlaw pointed out that social workers have the skills and expertise to address the wide range of problems facing students. She noted that social workers can link students and their families to vital basic necessities, train teachers and other staff to respond effectively to crises and de-escalate situations, and provide mental health counseling to students.

Ms. Laidlaw recalled that there was discussion in the December Finance Committee meeting about purchasing new window shades and buses, even though the buses are still in such good condition that secondary buyers are eager to buy them. She emphasized that the needs of students and their families must be addressed first because the District is here to serve them, and their needs are far more significant and essential than any of the material items being purchased. Ms. Laidlaw urged the members of the Finance Committee to expend funds first on social workers because of their ability to bring healing to a child or school, rather than spending on window shades and buses or other material goods that have no real impact on students.

Ms. Laidlaw offered to provide data and research to the Finance Committee about the potential impact of school-based social workers.

Commissioner Evans pointed out that in an Excellence in Student Achievement Committee meeting earlier this week, the Deputy Superintendent for Teaching & Learning was asked to provide a cost estimate for having one FTE for social workers in every building. He stated that he will look into this further, but cannot promise that this can be accomplished under the District's current budget constraints.

II. Review and Approve Minutes of January 16, 2014 Finance Committee Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Evans to approve the January 16, 2014 Finance Committee meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

III. Review Amendments to 2013-14 RCSD Budget

- 1. Amend 2013-14 General Fund Budget – Resolution No. 2013-14: 499**
- 2. Amend 2013-14 Special Aid Grant Fund Budget – Resolution No. 2013-14: 500**
- 3. Amend 2013-14 Food Service Fund Budget – Resolution No. 501**
- 4. Amend 2013-14 RCSD Budget – Resolution No. 502**

Bill Ansbro reported that the cost for additional social workers to provide at least 1.0FTE in every building would amount to approximately \$1.25M. He noted that there is a \$40M budget gap for 2014-15, but this does not address the priorities for funding. Mr. Ansbro clarified that the \$1.25M reflects the additional cost for bringing the number of social workers to 1.0FTE in every school.

Vern Connors provided an overview of the proposed amendments to the 2013-14 RCSD budget:

- Overall increase in revenue of \$8.9M, with most of this increase due to additional Special Aid (grant) funding (\$5.6M). Another \$2.8M was received in General Fund revenue, due to receipt of \$2.1M in NYS Aid and \$0.7M in local funds
- The majority of additional NYS Aid was in the form of Building Aid (\$2.1M) to reimburse the District for costs of improving/repairing facilities
- Most of the increased revenue in Special Aid was due to receipt of new grants: \$2.9M in NYS grants for full-day pre and \$1.4M in federal grant funds for Strengthening Teacher Leadership and Effectiveness.
- The largest increase in expenditures was for Variable Expenses (\$5.1M), primarily for services provided by BOCES for Special Education services. Another \$1.855M in expenses was incurred for substitute teachers, overtime, and civil service substitutes, with an additional \$1.9M in costs for benefits for these additional staff.

Parent Representative Giancarlo Giannini recalled that a \$1.0 – 1.5M School Improvement Grant was anticipated for Wilson Commencement Academy, and asked whether these funds were reflected in the current budget amendments or in previous amendments. Mr. Ansbro replied that this revenue was included in the previous set of budget amendments in December 2013.

Commissioner Evans noted that the current budget amendments indicate an 18.8FTE increase in teachers, and inquired whether the additional teaching staff is needed because more students are coming into the District.

Commissioner Powell recalled that the additional teachers are needed largely because of full-day preK, to the extent that District buildings have been able to expand on site to accommodate additional students in these programs.

Vern Connors reported that the additional staffing was needed for 10.5FTE for full-day preK, 2.2FTE for the Office of Adult Career & Education Services (OACES) from expansion of their workforce preparation program, and addition of 0.6FTE for Special Education.

Mr. Ansbrow explained that positions are filled in specific areas that are supported by grants so that services can be provided, and the District tries to avoid filling positions by using General Fund revenue.

Mr. Ansbrow noted that the Lunch Fund is currently balanced, but projections for future years indicate a shortfall because staff pay and other costs are increasing at a rate faster than revenue increases. He reported that these issues will have to be addressed in the near future to prevent the Lunch Fund from impinging on the General Fund.

Motion by Commissioner Cruz to approve budget amendments. Seconded by Commissioner Evans. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

IV. Review and Approve January 2014 Financial Report

Motion by Commissioner Cruz to approve the January 2014 Financial Report. Seconded by Commissioner Evans. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

V. Review and Accept Quarterly Change Order Report

Motion by Commissioner Cruz to accept the Quarterly Change Order Report for October through December 2013. Seconded by Commissioner Evans. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

VI. Review Resolutions in preparation for February 27, 2014 Board Business Meeting

A. EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Final Payments:

- 1. Kuitems Construction, Inc. – final payment for general construction work for renovations to School No. 2 – Resolution No. 2013-14: 503**
- 2. Testa construction, Inc. – final payment for general construction work for renovations to School No. 57 – Resolution No. 2013-14: 504**
- 3. Pipitone Enterprises, LLC – final payment for mechanical work for renovations to School No. 34 – Resolution No. 2013-14: 505**

4. Kuitems Construction, Inc. – final payment for general construction work for renovations to School Nos. 10 and 33 – Resolution No. 2013-14: 506

Motion by Commissioner Cruz to address all above final payment resolutions for Facilities as a group. Seconded by Commissioner Evans. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

Motion by Commissioner Cruz to approve all above final payment resolutions for Facilities. Seconded by Commissioner Evans. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

Other:

5. Agreement with Vendor (to be determined) to represent the District's interests before the State Legislature and Executive Branch – Resolution No. 2013-14: 507

Commissioner Powell explained that the rationale for this resolution is to have a lobby effort specifically to support Phase II legislation for the FMP. She noted that she has discussed potential concerns of the Board of Education with the Chief Financial Officer to provide guidelines for the Request For Information (RFI) and to avoid conflict of interest or impropriety.

Commissioner Evans stated that he has not been impressed with the previous lobbyists selected, and expressed concerned about the criteria/guidelines used in the selection process.

Mr. Ansbro stated that he will know the specific vendor selected in time for the February 27, 2014 Board Business meeting. He reported that he met with legislative staff last fall, who advised that a specific bill be introduced by the end of 2013 in order to have any chance for the Phase II legislation to be approved by June 2014. Mr. Ansbro stated that specific legislation has not yet been drafted and therefore there is concern that outside lobbying support is needed at this point. He pointed out that Phase II of the FMP will not be part of the 2014-15 budget discussions, and will have to be addressed as part of the post-budget discussion. Mr. Ansbro stated that the resolution specifically requests a contract through Dec. 31, 2014 with the option to renew for an additional year. He noted that he has requested responses to the RFI, and will review the responses with the Superintendent to make a recommendation to the Board.

Commissioner Evans inquired about the costs under this proposed contract. Mr. Ansbro replied that he does not yet have this information.

Commissioner Powell inquired whether the members of the Finance Committee would support conducting a five-minute meeting before the Board Business meeting on February 27, 2014 to review the recommended vendor and the dollar figures.

Commissioner Evans suggested providing information of the selected vendor and costs to the Committee members prior to the Board Business meeting to provide an opportunity for review and consideration. He expressed concerned about the scope of service and the specific actions/deliverables to ensure that the District is receiving an adequate return for this funding.

Commissioner Powell commented that the term of the contract should be through June 2014, with the option to renew through Dec. 2014 because the initial contract is to focus on legislation to be enacted by June 2014.

Motion by Commissioner Evans to table above resolution regarding contract to represent the District's interests before the State legislature and Executive branch until the next Finance Committee meeting on February 27, 2014. Seconded by Commissioner Cruz. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**

Motion by Commissioner Cruz to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Evans. **Adopted 3-0, with concurrence of Parent Representative.**