

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

BUDGET WORKSHOP

Wednesday, January 30, 2013

6:00 p.m.

Manchester High School – Room 293

PRESENT: Atwater, Crockett, Cruz, Hagenow, Leon, Luxenberg,
Pattacini, Scappaticci, Walton

ALSO PRESENT: Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kisiel, Assistant to the
Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks, Assistant
Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Matfess

ABSENT: Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr.
Richardson

A. OPENING

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Neal Leon, Co-Chair of the Personnel & Finance Committee. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Leon.

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

APPROVED – Minutes of the Budget Workshop 1/23/2013.

Mr. Crockett moved and Mr. Pattacini seconded the motion.

9/0 – Voted in favor.

C. OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Leon reminded everyone that this is the 3rd budget workshop this season and that the budget would most likely be adopted tonight in a Special Meeting of the Board. He thanked the administration for their work so far.

D. BUDGET DISCUSSION

Dr. Kisiel asked Mrs. Brooks to share a list of possible additions to the budget regarding school facilities. Mrs. Brooks reviewed that Mr. Ziegler had prioritized items that were over and above what is currently budgeted for or planned for with the prior November bond referendum, dividing the list into Priority 1 and Priority 2 items. The additional estimated cost for Priority 1 items total \$500,000 and the estimated cost of Priority 2 items total

\$420,000. The Priority 2 items are all oil tank replacements that previously were put on hold in the past due to other unforeseen improvements, especially at Verplanck with the asbestos removal and tile replacement and MHS lighting.

Mr. Crockett asked if the number next to the item was a priority number. Mrs. Brooks stated it was, the items were first divided into Priority 1 and 2, and then further prioritized.

Mr. Pattacini notes that the oil tank replacement has been deferred for a number of years. He asks what obligation we have per state law or requirements we have to remove those oil tanks. Mrs. Brooks noted there is a list of replacement years specified for each tank. These are the next few on the list and they are all approximately 15-20 years old. Mrs. Brooks further noted that because the last few tanks that were replaced were in fine shape, the decision had been made to defer these and do capital improvements of a higher priority, but according to the State we are over the time limit to replace them. Mrs. Brooks was unsure of the exact State guidelines, but it may be as little as 10 years.

Mr. Pattacini wondered if the State had ever sanctioned a school district for not replacing tanks in a timely manner. Mrs. Brooks did not know of any districts being sanctioned.

Ms. Hagenow questioned the painting item, wondering which schools that applied to. Mrs. Brooks noted that is a priority item in many schools. Dr. Kisiel added that certain sections of Illing was of particular priority for that item.

Ms. Cruz wondered if there was any reimbursement associated with the oil tank replacement. Mrs. Brooks noted there is, with the actual number depending on the actual cost and the age of the tank, however the reimbursement goes to the Town, not the Board of Education. In the past the Town has passed along those funds, but it is not a given and may take up to two years for reimbursement. The approximate reimbursement is 67%.

Mr. Atwater wondered if the tanks were at their maximum life. Mrs. Brooks affirmed they were.

Mr. Pattacini noted that the SMARTR Committee is considering renovations at both Washington and Robertson, yet they are both listed as needing additional work on this list under Priority 1. Mrs. Brooks stated that because any work through SMARTR will be years out, the electric upgrades cannot wait and currently there is not enough power at Robertson to add an AC for a special education class because of the current lack of power.

Mr. Pattacini wondered if any portion of this list should be considered capital projects to bond for? Mrs. Brooks noted that all of the items, aside from painting, would qualify as capital projects, however it is not typical to bond for items under \$10,000. She notes that the 3510 account typically gets used for emergency items or asbestos remediation and there is never enough left over for these other items.

Mr. Leon asked if the MHS student parking lot light repair was a safety concern? Mrs. Brooks replied it is and the underground wires are not working and many lights are out.

Ms. Luxenberg asked if the exterior door replacement at Buckley was a safety concern. Dr. Kisiel stated that is more of an aesthetic concern.

Mr. Pattacini noted that while many of the items on the list might qualify for bonding, it would likely be over a year before the work was able to be started if that was the route taken, and if these items are covered in the operating budget they may be able to be completed in the next fiscal year. Mrs. Brooks agreed. Mr. Pattacini wondered if any of the items warrant being done in the current year? Mrs. Brooks noted that if any items come in under budget in the current year the list would be reviewed to see if any could be done at that point. Mr. Pattacini further clarified that if these items are not done through the next budget, they will ultimately have to be done a subsequent year or through a bond referendum and wonders if we are at risk with any of these projects if we extend out another year. Mrs. Brooks notes we have to do some electrical upgrades. Ms. Matfess reviews each year where electrical is required for medically fragile students and there is a scramble to pull electricity from one classroom and move it to another. It is coming to the point where many of the classrooms need the air quality for these medically fragile children, and sometimes that means the student cannot attend their home school because of the issue. Without additional funds added, Mrs. Brooks cannot see that we will have the funds to address this issue at this time. Buckley has a high need for this, as well as Keeney, Washington, and Robertson.

Ms. Cruz wondered if there are Requests For Proposals being sent out for these items. Mrs. Brooks stated that projects under \$10,000 do not have RFP's, but those over \$10,000-\$12,000 do, including the parking lot repairs, electrical upgrades, and boiler replacements among others. Ms. Cruz wondered how much longer an RFP would add to the timeline. Mrs. Brooks noted that she can have results from an RFP within two weeks. She would like these items in the paper by March 1st so she can award the contracts by April and the work can be completed over the summer.

Mr. Leon questioned whether the Buckley electrical distribution upgrade was in fact an item covered under the \$4.9 million projects recently bonded for. Mrs. Brooks checked with Mr. Ziegler, and in fact this is in addition to the bonded work. Mr. Leon was disappointed that was not all included in the bonded work to be done.

Mr. Leon pointed out that other than the oil tanks, none of this work qualifies for reimbursement so he is not sure bonding for it is the right strategy.

Mr. Crockett stated this list does not include the new critical assessment list that Mr. Ziegler is looking at and the oil tanks may in fact be included in the next bond issue.

Dr. Kisiel noted at the last budget workshop there was a discussion about the condition of the portable classrooms at Illing Middle School. Dr. Kisiel had secured an independent lab report regarding the mold and building conditions and there was found to be an unhealthy level of mold, even in this cold weather. The warm weather will only raise the mold level, making the buildings increasingly unhealthy. It was also determined that there is evidence of rodents in the structures. The results of these findings require Dr. Kisiel to recommend not using these classrooms immediately. He has talked with the principal of Illing and developed temporary plans to convert the orchestra room into two classrooms by creating a wall and converting one of the current computer labs in the library into a class, moving the computers into the library. This is the tentative plan. Dr. Kisiel further explained that since the portables will be torn down to make way for the classroom additions that are scheduled to be built, he recommends, through the Buildings & Sites Committee, that we request the town, through the referendum project, to remove the facilities as quickly as possible. It is in the best interests of everyone to act quickly and it is hoped that this can be accomplished within the next 2-3 weeks.

Mr. Leon states it is commendable that the administration is acting so quickly and notes that Illing already has several shared spaces and this further illuminates the need for more funds in the budget for facilities. Dr. Kisiel agreed, noting that teaching strings on the stage in the cafeteria is not ideal.

Mr. Scappaticci inquired about the condition of the portables at Robertson. Dr. Kisiel stated they had already looked at those and they were newer portables than the Illing ones. Mrs. Brooks added that of the Illing portables one was bought used 18 years ago and another is 21 years old. She added that the two older portables at Robertson had already been removed. Mr. Scappaticci wanted to be clear, mold is not an issue at the Robertson

portables that are currently functioning as classroom space. Dr. Kisiel agreed.

E. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

None.

F. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

G. CLOSING COMMENTS

Ms. Walton thanked the administration and noted this was a lot of work, especially with the portables issue, which is disappointing but not surprising as this issue was discussed last year. We cannot wait any longer on this issue.

Mr. Pattacini also thanked the administration. He noted that the Superintendent's original recommended budget started with making sure we provide adequate education for our students. This year is different than prior years. For a number of years the administration has made great strides in creating efficiencies within our district, as noted by the \$142,000 this year that the administration identified. He commends the administration for taking those types of steps that not only assure the continuity of education, but improve the quality of education while at the same time reduce costs. Mr. Pattacini is also aware that there are issues that the Board needs to address regarding school safety and facilities, and we also need to stay focused on student achievement as a district in need of improvement. We need to be careful as a Board to ensure that we are moving our district forward in the best way that we can.

Mr. Leon thanked the administration as well, especially Mrs. Brooks. He noted that this is where we change and/or approve the budget presented by the administration. Then the budget moves on to the Board of Directors and what they think the town can afford. The Superintendent's original recommendation was for a 4.57% increase. Now we can subtract the \$142,000 in proposed savings and add other items high on the list not originally included, including the portables among others. Mr. Leon notes we did not yet talk about security because the police assessment is yet to be complete. He is bothered by not having the numbers regarding that to put in the budget. Mr. Leon feels if we do not ask the Board of Directors to put it in our budget we have no guarantees that we will get the money at a later date. Mr. Leon asks Board members to consider a number to be discussed during deliberations for security to at least put something in the budget.

Mr. Leon notes that after adjournment the Board will move into a Special Board Meeting after having time to caucus. He anticipates that meeting to begin at approximately 7:00 p.m.

H. ADJOURN

Mr. Leon called for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Crockett moved and Mr. Pattacini seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

9/0 – Voted in favor.

Adjournment 6:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Leon
Board Secretary