

## **MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION**

### **Budget Workshop**

**January 13, 2016**

MHS Room 293

**PRESENT:** Hagenow, Jacobsen, Leon, Pattacini, Scappaticci, Stafford, Stefanovicz, Thames

**ALSO PRESENT:** Superintendent of Schools Geary, Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Matfess, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Radikas

**ABSENT:** Pazda

#### **A. ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Leon, co-Chair of the Personnel & Finance Committee, at 6:03 p.m. Mr. Leon reviewed this is a meeting of the Personnel & Finance committee held in a casual workshop format.

#### **B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**Mr. Leon** led the room in the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **C. OPENING REMARKS**

**Mr. Leon** noted Superintendent Geary presented the 16-17 budget proposal at the January 11th Board of Education meeting. This evening will be a Q&A session regarding the proposal.

#### **D. SUPERINTENDENT'S BUDGET PRESENTATION**

**Mr. Geary** noted he would not be reviewing the entire budget presentation this evening, but would be answering questions from Monday, along with other questions presented this evening.

Mr. Geary had reached out to CREC for their budget information with no reply at this time. He noted he is working with the Town IT staff to itemize the shared IT services and reminds the Board we have 7,000 users and devices in the school district.

Regarding the substitute teacher costs for Kelly Educational, Mr. Geary noted some school districts have an early release day weekly to accommodate professional development, while we release teachers during the school day with the use of sub coverage. He notes we could investigate the cost savings of having a weekly early release day. Approximately \$800,000 of the substitute costs can be attributed to sick and personal time of certified staff, while approximately \$200,000 is attributed to professional development substitute coverage.

**Ms. Hagenow** asked about the shared IT services. Mr. Geary reviewed we have our own IT department, however the town provides some shared services, including for our phones.

**Mr. Thames** noted an 18.8% reduction in the textbook line and wondered about the rationale in that reduction and if we are fully funding our needs. Mr. Geary noted that this year was a particularly high year for textbooks due to the new math curriculum at the high school with both texts and online access. We also used some Alliance carryover funds for this line. We will not need as much in the budget for next year.

Mr. Thames asked about the increase in overtime of 8%. Mr. Geary noted the initial request for that line was higher. In 14-15 we spent \$475,000 and this year we are recommending \$368,000. Some things that impact overtime include summer cleaning due to the fact that buildings are used most of the summer, leaving a short window to get summer cleaning done, along with winter snow removal as needed.

**Mr. Pattacini** asked about considering an early release day weekly for professional development. He wondered what level of PD we provide today and the need for additional PD for our staff. Mr. Geary noted we do need more professional development, which is why we use substitute coverage to provide more than the six half day PDs we currently have. Mr. Geary notes we need to look at the cost impact of a weekly early release day, which may be a hardship for parents. He wondered if MELC could help support that, though he noted it may not be cost effective if we have to help with childcare. Mr. Geary feels that shortening the school day by 2 hours or providing a

substitute is basically a wash in terms of class time. We would need to survey parents and their needs in considering this.

Mr. Pattacini recalled the mention of support for kids struggling with behaviors in grades K-2. Mr. Geary noted a significant shift in the district on how to help these children. Previously in-school and out-of-school suspensions were used, which are proven to be ineffective. We need to find a way to support these children without disrupting other students. Mr. Geary notes there is a disproportionate number of minority and poor students affected. We are working to provide support with staff professional development, social thinking curriculum, training, providing Deans of Students in some schools and through the Family & Community Partnership and Hartford Foundation for Public Giving grants. Next Tuesday's professional development with Ross Green at 8am is open to Board members and is a great resource.

**Ms. Jacobsen** went back to the Kelly substitute line and the approximate \$800,000 spent on sick time. She feels this seems high. Mr. Geary noted certified staff contracts provide for 15 sick days a year, though most do not use all of these and carry them over for extended illnesses or maternity leave. Mr. Geary also noted that about a year and a half ago, the rate of pay given to Kelly subs was increased to make us more desirable to subs. Mrs. Brooks added that the \$800,000 also covers personal days, jury duty, and family medical leave. Mr. Geary noted he can get a graph on the subject. Ms. Jacobsen wondered if a building substitute would help with costs. Mr. Geary noted we do already have building subs, one in each elementary school, along with 2 at Bennet, Illing and MHS. However, many of those subs wind up with assignments when not being utilized as a substitute.

**Mr. Leon** noted that last year we had compared our absentee rate versus other districts in our area and our numbers were very similar. Mrs. Brooks noted that about half the teacher use 18 days per year. Mr. Geary added that the teacher's contract recently signed lowered the number of personal days from 5 to 4.

**Mr. Scappaticci** wondered what the process would be for use of the field trip funds. Mr. Geary noted the curriculum office would be in charge of this and the goal is to provide equitable experiences across the district. PTA's will still provide assistance with fundraising.

Mr. Scappaticci wondered what we could afford to lose if we have to make cuts to the budget. Mr. Geary noted that last year we had not taken teacher retirements into account at this point, while this year we have. There is little to no room for cuts. We have a well thought out 3 year plan for buildings and maintenance on those buildings is the only thing we could cut, which would be a bad idea, as we have learned in the past.

The town is projecting about \$500,000 less from the state this year. Mrs. Brooks noted that the town has stated it will be able to deal with that deficit by balancing the cost savings of fuel and the moderate weather we have had this year.

Mr. Scappaticci hears we need to take care of our buildings, but if push comes to shove we choose education over maintenance. Mr. Geary noted he also has cut vehicle replacement costs each year, which is deferring those costs.

**Ms. Jacobsen** asked about the electricity reduction and increase in water/sewage. Mr. Geary noted we take those figures from the town. He stated water cost has risen 1.9% and we included that figure.

Ms. Jacobsen asked about teacher retirements, wondering if those teachers will be replaced. Mr. Geary explained they will be replaced, but with teachers at a lower salary rate. By the time of retirement many teachers earn about \$82-88,000, while a new teacher, mid-level, may earn \$54,000. We aim to recruit quality and minority candidates.

**Mr. Pattacini** noted a reduction in building maintenance would be how to minimize the impact on learning if we need to make cuts, however we need to support our commitment to our buildings. Mr. Pattacini noted we share services with the town, including maintenance of the field at the high school. With the new turf going in, those costs will drop. Beyond IT, what other shared services could we evaluate to save funds? Mr. Geary stated we will get a list of these shared services. We will inquire about the savings potential on the fields maintenance. Mr. Pattacini would like to request the town create a new maintenance plan and factor in the impact of the new field.

**Mr. Leon** is not in favor of finding potential savings with an early release day weekly. He notes the \$200,000 is merely 2/10 of a percent of our budget and an early release

day would place a burden on our families for daycare. It contradicts the funding of field trips to help families. Mr. Leon notes our economics differ from other districts that have a weekly early release day.

Mr. Leon asked about the \$100,000 security line item, clarifying this is repayment of a loan used to upgrade security in the district. He wondered who we pay this loan to. Mr. Geary stated we give the funds to the town, who in turn pays the bank. It is a 4 year loan.

Mr. Leon imagines a cost savings of \$20,000 at most in the field maintenance. He commends Mr. Geary and the staff for their work on this budget and he is very pleased with a 1.9% increase request.

**Mr. Pattacini** echoed Mr. Leon's appreciation of the administration's work. He feels the budget is very reasonable and balances the needs of the taxpayers, while providing an adequate, quality education for our students.

**Mr. Geary** gave credit to the entire Central Office team, principals, and grant funding in the effort to fund the vision and mission of Manchester Public Schools.

#### **E. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None.

#### **F. CLOSING COMMENTS**

**Mr. Leon** wondered if we want to hold the scheduled Budget workshop on February 20th. Mr. Pattacini noted our next Board meeting is February 25th. He asked when we need to adopt the budget in order to get it to the town. Mrs. Brooks noted we need to have it delivered to the town by February 12th, so if there are not too many changes, February 10th would be sufficient for adoption. Mr. Leon felt we could keep the January 27th budget workshop on the calendar, and skip the 20th. Mr. Pattacini supported skipping the meeting on the 20th.

The Budget workshop scheduled for January 20th has been cancelled. The January 27th workshop will remain on the calendar for now.

**G. ADJOURN**

**Mr. Pattacini moved and Ms. Hagenow seconded the motion for adjournment.**

**8/0 - Voted in favor. Meeting adjourned 6:49 p.m.**

**H. NEXT MEETING**

The next budget workshop is scheduled for January 27, 2016 at MHS, Room 293, at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci  
Board Secretary