

BROOKLINE SCHOOL BOARD
JANUARY 12, 2017
PUBLIC HEARING
MEETING MINUTES

A Public Hearing was conducted by the Brookline School Board on Thursday, January 12, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. at the Captain Samuel Douglass Academy.

Chairman Matthew Maguire presided.

Members of the School Board Present: Patricia Lynch, Vice Chairman
Erin Sarris, Secretary
Lauren DiGennaro
Kenneth Haag

Members of the Finance Committee Present: Linda Chomiak
Brian Rater
Gale Taylor

Members of the School Board Absent:

Also in Attendance: Andrew Corey, Superintendent
Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent
Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator
Dennis Dobe, Principal, Captain Samuel Douglass Academy
Daniel Molinari, Principal, Richard Maghakian Memorial School

BROOKLINE SCHOOL DISTRICT
FY18 BUDGET

It was explained the purpose of the Public Hearing was to present and obtain public input on the Brookline School District proposed FY18 budget.

The FY18 budget, as proposed, allows the District to meet the goals and objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan in the following ways; 1) reduce class sizes; although the entire goal is not accomplished in a single year, it goes a long way towards that effort, 2) maintain current programming; the focus in the past few years has been on Math and Science, 3) address all Federally mandated programming costs; the Board learned in November there would be an increase of \$149,406 to the special education line items to meet the needs of incoming students and students that were identified, 4) a Warrant Article seeks to establish a special education trust fund to be utilized to address unanticipated expenses, 5) building maintenance; one aging building and another well into its useful life expectancy, 6) continue technology expansion to meet building and SAU goals; and 7) enhance safety and security aspects.

Article 2; Operating Budget - total amount of \$8,833,998.

Article 3; Maintenance Fund - proposal to allocate \$40,000 from FY17 unreserved fund balance.

Article 4; Special Education Trust Fund - proposal to allocate \$10,000 from FY17 unreserved fund balance.

Article 5; SAU proposed FY18 budget - \$271,051.

The total proposed FY18 budget is \$9,155,049, which represents an increase of \$261,435 or 2.94% over the FY17 approved budget.

Superintendent Corey remarked as the Chairman spoke about during the School Board meeting, we were unable to reach an agreement with the Teachers.

When comparing the FY17 approved budget to the FY18 proposed, there is a 3.57% increase in the operating budget, a 300% increase in the Maintenance Fund (going from \$10,000 to \$40,000), a 100% increase in the Special Education Trust Fund (new this year), and a reduction of 0.03% in the SAU budget for a total proposed increase of 2.94%.

Article 2

To see if the Brookline School District will vote to raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$8,833,998. Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$8,759,757, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the school district or by law or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only.

Superintendent Corey stated one of the pieces discussed at length was a concern of the Board and Administration in regard to how class sizes have been creeping up. During the work at the Board level, policy was passed providing guidelines for class sizes in the future. What is being seen are bubbles in particular grades. The reason why enrollment is staying constant is because a very large group is being sent to the Hollis Brookline Cooperative (COOP) School District and the groups following are slightly smaller. When looking down at RMMS a rise in enrollment is starting to be seen as the Town experiences turnover in existing properties.

In response to increasing enrollment, there are three classroom positions that were added. That was done through reallocation in two of the cases. The 6th grade enrollment next year will be small. As a result, the Administration recommends reallocating that teacher to a grade where enrollment is larger. The numbers in special education have decreased, and the District is able to swap the position of Case Manager for a classroom teacher. There was an unexpected rise in enrollment in the summer, and in July the Administration came before the Board with a request to redirect existing resources to a classroom teacher. That person came on for the current school year, and is included in the budget for FY18.

With regard to academics, Superintendent Corey remarked part of everything they do has a research component. CSDA will migrate its library to more of a learning commons model, which is more of a technology/resource hub. Also being sought for CSDA is new computer devices for the Science Department. RMMS is looking at infrastructure as directed by the Strategic Plan. Both facilities have experienced security and safety updates.

Revenue and grant funds are decreasing. Two of the major differences are the estimated reductions in the Retained Education Tax (\$31,700) and the Adequate Aide Grant (\$38,500). Major increases to the budget include: health insurance; \$77,869 or 9.5% (15.9% Guaranteed Maximum Rate (GMR)), special education tuition; \$42,466 or 244%, special education transportation; \$45,000 or 134%, and the New Hampshire Retirement System; \$44,905 or 8.3% (rate changes every two years).

Superintendent Corey spoke of a handout provided that detailed the default budget (copy attached). Were the default budget to be adopted, it could result in higher class sizes, safety/security concerns left unaddressed, the science and technology upgrades would likely not occur, and building maintenance would likely be deferred.

If adopted, the FY18 default budget would consist of the FY17 adopted operating budget; \$8,529,621, contracted increases/reductions; \$287,676, and one-time FY17 expenses; (\$57,540 reduction) for a total default budget of \$8,759,757. As an example of contracted increases/reductions, Superintendent Corey spoke of the math program the Board approved for four years. In approving the program, the Board also approved the cost. That becomes part of the default budget. In contrast, the technology items are proposed on a yearly basis. If the default budget were to be passed, those technology items would not be included in the budget.

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition – None

Article 3

To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of up to \$40,000 from the June 30 unreserved fund balance (surplus) available for transfer on July 1 of this year to be added to the previously established SCHOOL FACILITIES MAINTENANCE FUND.

Superintendent Corey remarked historically the request has been for an allocation of \$10,000 to the School Facilities Maintenance Fund (Fund). The request of the community is to support an allocation of \$40,000 based upon anticipated projects. A slide was provided, which identified capital projects slated for FY18 and FY19. They include: Parking lot reseal/repairs for RMMS; \$12,000 and CSDA; \$11,000 in FY18 and telephone system replacement (CSDA); \$25,000, fire panel (CSDA); \$40,000, upgrade energy management system (CSDA); \$30,000, office renovation (RMMS); \$30,000, and underground drainage system at rear play fields (CSDA); \$40,000 in FY19. Were the proposed warrant article to pass, the fund would have a balance of \$95,616.

It was noted the order of projects identified in the Capital Improvement Plan are subject to change on a yearly basis based upon need, e.g., unforeseen maintenance issues, change in circumstances. Superintendent Core noted one of the projects that will be reviewed carefully next year is the telephone system as it is believed there is the possibility of Federal dollars being available that could cover the cost of the wiring and infrastructure associated with the phone system.

Peter Webb, 48 Mason Road

Stated he simply wished for clarification; what was being discussed was utilizing FY17 unassigned fund balance (surplus), and utilizing \$40,000 of that as an allocation to the Fund to address maintenance items that are difficult to anticipate, e.g., have a pool of funds created out of surplus. Superintendent Corey stated that to be correct. He noted the Administration is required to seek approval from the Board to expend those funds, and to conduct a Public Hearing.

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Article 4

To see if the Brookline School District will vote to establish a SPECIAL EDUCATION EXPENDABLE TRUST FUND per RSA 198:20-c, to be used for special education expenses and to raise and appropriate up to \$10,000 to put in the fund, with this amount to come from fund balance available for transfer on July 1. No amount to be raised from taxation, further to name the school board as agents to expend from the fund.

Superintendent Corey stated the intent to be to utilize surplus to begin to fund a reserve account for special education costs. He commented cost associated with special education is one of the most volatile things the Administration faces. He used the example of families that moved into the District this year. The Administration had no prior knowledge of their arrival. As a result of that, the FY18 budget includes an increase of slightly over \$149,000. Those students are with us now. There is no alternative than to go into the general operating budget (has been frozen) and identify areas from within the budget to cover the costs. They will be able to do that, but it will be at the expense of some of the things that had been planned for, and in some cases that does impact regular education students.

Special education is a mandate; those services have to be provided. The Administration is of the belief that by establishing the fund and allowing it to build over time, it will provide the ability to address these types of issues in the future. Being proposed is an initial allocation of \$10,000. A typical out-of-district placement, which is required if a student cannot be serviced in district, comes at a cost of approx. \$90,000 (transportation and tuition). Those costs can reach hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Peter Webb, 48 Mason Road

Stated his comments were neither in favor or opposition. He questioned the amount of the FY17 unassigned fund balance (surplus), and was informed it is projected at \$35,000 if the proposed warrant articles are funded.

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Article 5

Shall the voters of the Brookline School District adopt a school administrative unit budget of \$1,498,630 for the forthcoming fiscal year in which \$271,051 is assigned to the school budget of this school district? This year's adjusted budget of \$1,485,787 with \$268,679 assigned to the school budget of this school district will be adopted if the article does not receive a majority vote of all the school district voters voting in this school administrative unit.

Superintendent Corey stated Article 5 represents Brookline's share of costs associated with the SAU Administrative Offices. All of the business services come out of the SAU budget, e.g., payroll, benefits, etc., overall structure for Student Services across the SAU, e.g., special education services and students on 504s, it also funds the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent as well as the support staff. At present, there are 13 individuals employed in the SAU Administrative Offices. The vast majority of the budget is related to salary and benefits, and represents the cost of running the district on a day-to-day basis. The cost is shared proportionally (formula) between the Brookline School District, Hollis School District, and the COOP School District.

Peter Webb, 48 Mason Road

Stated his comments were neither in favor or opposition. He questioned what lead to a slight reduction from the FY17 approved budget, e.g., attendance. Superintendent Corey responded Average Daily Membership (ADM or attendance) is an element of the formula as is equalized valuation. The reduction was not the result of a single driver.

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Testimony in Favor - None

Testimony in Opposition - None

Superintendent Corey presented a few additional slides. The first identified ten-year gross appropriations; compared to FY13 (\$73,683), FY18 represents a decrease of (-0.80%). A pie chart identified the distribution of expenses (was updated since initially posted on the website). A bar chart showed the unassigned fund balances from FY13; \$34,194, FY14; \$21,893, FY15; \$346,298, FY15; \$391,094, and projected for FY17; \$35,000. Superintendent Corey spoke of efforts to project the budget better to avoid a very large unassigned fund balance. He commented on the years when the unassigned fund balance was large noting there are times when unexpected circumstances have a positive financial impact. A slide was provided detailing the enrollment trend from 2004-2017. Superintendent Corey noted the trend comes from the New England School Development Council (NESDEC). The figures don't necessarily align with actual enrollment. NESDEC does not and cannot take into account students that move into and move out of the district.

Chairman Maguire opened the floor once again for public testimony.

Tom Humphreys, Selectman, Town of Brookline

Questioned if the cost identified for the telephone system replacement at CSDA (\$25,000) was based on actual quotes received or an estimate. Principal Dobe stated it was developed by the School Administration along with the Technology

Department at the SAU having reviewed the system currently being utilized at the High School, and developing a system that would be similar and cost effective.

Selectman Humphreys stated his background of over 40 years in the telecommunications world, and offered to share his expertise with the District.

Chairman Maguire declared the Public Hearing closed at 7:38 p.m.

Date _____ Signed _____