



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES December 4, 2018

Meeting:	School Committee
Date:	December 4, 2018
Location:	MERMHS Learning Commons
Attendees:	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Avi Urbas, Director of Finance Shannon Erdmann, Chairperson Rachel Fitzgibbon, Co-Chairperson Ken Warnock Ann Cameron Sarah Wolf Caroline Weld
Absent:	Julie Riordan
Guests:	Patricia Puglisi, Principal MERHS Allison Collins, Director of Student Services
Recorded by:	Gail Hunter

A. Call to Order – Ms. Erdmann called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

- 1) **Public Comment** – There was no public comment this evening.
- 2) **Student Report** – Spencer Meek a Junior will be providing the student report starting at the next Committee meeting.
- 3) **Chairman’s Report** –

Ms. Erdmann recognized a Memorial School Family for their generous and anonymous gift to Memorial School Special Education Specialized Programs, which is a District wide program based at Memorial School. Ms. Erdmann indicated the family had been asked if they would like

to attend a School Committee Meeting in order for the Committee to express their recognition of the gift – the family declined preferring to remain anonymous. The Committee acknowledged the gift and thanked the family.

4) Consent Agenda

- Acceptance of Warrants
- Budget Transfers
- Minutes 11/20/18

Mr. Urbas requested the Budget Transfers pulled to be addressed in the FY 19 Budget Update discussion. Ms. Fitzgibbon indicated Mira Vista should have been Merrowvista a Camp in Tuftonboro, NH.

Ms. Cameron moved to approve the Consent Agenda (without the Budget Transfers and with the correction to Merrowvista), Mr. Warnock seconded the motion. The motion passed with Ms. Cameron abstaining from approving the Minutes of 11/20/18, she was not in attendance at the meeting.

5) Sub-Committee Reports

➤ Elementary Facilities/MSBC (Ms. Weld and Ms. Cameron)

Ms. Weld stated the School Building Committee has moved into the Design Development phase of the project and identified sub-committees to identify the Committee's goals and objectives for this phase. The Design Development phase will be completed and presented on February 5, 2019.

➤ Finance Committee (Ms. Cameron and Ms. Erdmann)

The Collaborative Meeting scheduled for Monday, December 3, 2018 was cancelled. According to Superintendent Beaudoin the meeting was to be an opportunity for the Collaborative Group to review the MERSD FY 20 Budget and to discuss the results of a meeting held with Mr. Urbas, Mr. Federspiel and Mr. Zubricki and First Southwest. The meeting with First Southwest has not yet taken place and rescheduling the Collaborative Group meeting is proving challenging. However, this coming Friday, December 7, 2018 is looking promising for the Collaborative Group meeting and the First Southwest meeting may take place as early as Thursday, December 6, 2018, according to Mr. Urbas.

Ms. Weld pointed out that members of the Collaborative Group were welcome to attend the School Committee meeting to hear first hand the MERSD FY 20 Budget proposal; they were not in attendance.

➤ Policy Committee (Mr. Warnock and Ms. Fitzgibbon)

This is the first read of the updated Transportation Policy for the Committee to review and approve at the next meeting. There were several small revisions to the policy.

The Policy Committee is forming a 5th Grade Trip Task Force with parents and staff. The Task Force will be facilitated by Principal Puglisi. The mission of the Task Force is to establish – if the Trip meets the programming and curriculum goals of the District; Superintendent Beaudoin identified some guiding questions for the Task Force. According to Ms. Fitzgibbon the Task Force will start in January 2019 with recommendations made in May 2019. This is Phase One of the Task Force and if the Trip remains as part of the 5th Grade Program Phase Two will re-establish the Trip along the guidelines of programming and curriculum.

The Policy sub-committee is also updating the Field Trip and School Travel policies and will have additional information at the next Committee Meeting.

Ms. Cameron appreciated the fact that the Routes were defined as Rural Routes. Additionally, she asked about the responsibility of the District for the students, is it the responsibility of the District once the students step on the bus? Superintendent Beaudoin indicated this is a legal area given the District contracts with a bus company. It is a parental responsibility to supervise children to the bus stop. Ms. Wolf agreed and wondered if this should be stated in the policy. It was concluded this is already part of the District Policy and the MA State Law.

➤ Negotiation Team (Ms. Wolf and Ms. Riordan)

The Negotiation Sub-Committees are working with Dr. Riley and going through the day to day issues work-loads, professional training, initiatives and these types of issues according to Superintendent Beaudoin. A meeting on stipends is scheduled for December 19, 2018. The objective of Negotiations is to stay on scheduled and have a ratified contract by April 2019.

6) Superintendent's Report –

- ✓ Superintendent Beaudoin extended a heartfelt THANK YOU to the Boosters for their support of the Athletic Department and indicated the Boosters had set up a Fan Site for fundraising in support of all District teams. Ms. Weld stated the Boosters also support Debate, Green Team, SWAG and demonstrate a huge amount of school spirit.
- ✓ Also recognized by Superintendent Beaudoin was Joe Janack MSHS Band and Music Teacher who along with the MERHS Chorus appeared with the Cape Ann Symphony. Tickets to the performances were sold out, it was a great honor for all who participated.
- ✓ Anti-Defamation League (ADL) World of Difference program has launched with a teacher group training on December 5, 2018. And a parent presentation planned for March 2019. The District had 30-35 students who applied and were accepted to participate in the Peer Training Program, the program prepares young people to use the positive power of peer influence to promote respect and civility in their schools and beyond.
- ✓ RULER continues to build within the District.
- ✓ Elementary ELA Task Force continues.
- ✓ Professional Development and Curriculum continues to move forward in the District.

7) New Business – There was no new business this evening.

8) Continued Business

➤ HS YRBS (Youth Risk Behavior Survey)

Principal Puglisi and Dr. Collins presented the results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

Ms. Cameron asked how the survey was administered? Dr. Collins responded it was pencil and paper, anonymous and evaluated by an outside resource. The response rate for the survey was 92% and she has a high level of confidence the results are reflective of overall enrollment.

Key YRBS Topics: Personal safety, violence related behavior and bullying – Depression and suicide – Substance use: tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs – Sexual behavior and Healthy lifestyle

Grade Distribution of Responses: Grade 9 – 111, Grade 10 – 98, Grade 11 – 82, Grade 12 – 79.

Gender Distribution of Responses: Male 158, Female 208

Analyzing Date: Two cautions in interpreting data: Due to student enrollment and response numbers, a one percentage point equates with 3-4 students. State data reflects 2017, last published survey results in MA.

Alcohol Use in Last 30 Days: Consumed at least on drink of alcohol – 42.8%. Consumed 5 or more drinks in a row within a two-hour period – 23.9%. Consumed 10 or more drinks in a row – 2.8%. 53% (of the students that reported drinking alcohol) usually obtained alcohol by someone giving it to them.

Marijuana Use: Lifetime use: Smoked marijuana one or more times – 42%. Only 2% reported using marijuana before age 13 As might be expected the rates of lifetime use and past 30-day use went up from 9% to 12% with particularly big jumps from grades 9 – 10. In past 30 days: smoked marijuana one or more times – 26.5%. (42% is consistent with previous survey, the State average is 38%)

Other Illegal Drug Use: Lifetime use: cocaine – 1.5%, inhalants – 2.8%, Heroin – .5%, Methamphetamine – .8%, ecstasy – 1%, Steroids – 1.3%, prescription pain medicine – 5%. 19.6% of students reported they were offered, sold or given illegal drugs on school property.

Smoking and Tobacco Use Past 30 Days: Smoked cigarettes on one or more days – 7.5% (An increase of 4% to 7.5% from previous year.) Used chewing tobacco, snuff or dip – 4%. Smoked cigars or cigarillos on one or more days – 5.8%. (Lower down from 10%.) Used an electronic vapor product – 40% (Down from 43% in 2017.)

Mental Health: Within the last 12 months; Sad or hopeless almost daily for more than 2 weeks – 22.6%, 16.5 were male and 27.4 were female.

Suicide Attempts Reported: Seriously considered a suicide attempt – 11.3%, planned to commit suicide – 8.8%, made one or more suicide attempts – 10.3% (increase from 7% in 2016.)

According to Dr. Collins this is an area of concern; 5 students have been screened through the school this year. There are programs in place SOS, TTA (Tell a Trusted Adult) – students are screened, and adults are informed.

Risk Related Behavior: Threatened or injured with a weapon on school property – 3%. Fighting on school property – 5.3%. Physically harmed in a dating relationship – 2.7%. Forced to engage in sexual activity in a dating relationship – 8.6% (increase from 6% in 2017.)

Bullying: Within the last 12 months – bullied on school property 12%. Increased by 2% from 2016, below state average of 14.6% and the highest percentage reported in grade 10. Experienced cyber bullying – 9.8% decrease from 2016 data – 11%.

Motor Vehicle Safety Concerns: In the 30 days prior to survey: 45% of all student drivers texted or emailed while driving. (This is higher than the State average which was 35%.) 21% of all students rode in a vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking, 7.6% of all students drove a car after drinking alcohol.

Sleep Habits/Concussions: On an average school night, 70% of students sleep 7 hours or less. Concussions 15.9% of students report they had a concussion in the last 12 months. (To date this school year, 12 concussions – ten in soccer.)

Areas of Concern: Suicidality/Depression – Marijuana use – Use of vape products – Alcohol consumption and binge drinking – Dating violence – Bullying

Supports and Interventions: Share survey results with community. Parent workshops and trainings – drug and alcohol use, bullying and vaping. Health education curriculum and staffing. Continue SBRIT – Signs of suicide program – Streamline counseling referral procedures – Academic/Behavioral Dean of Students – Involvement of SAPC.

School Committee Discussion:

Superintendent Beaudoin stated the results of the survey will assist the District in advocating for a School Resource Officer.

Ms. Cameron believes the District is doing a great job supporting students and the missing piece is the community. It is imperative to get the parents listening. Ms. Cameron would also like to see tracking of survey results grade to grade.

Ms. Cameron expressed concern about fentanyl. Superintendent Beaudoin stated the District became aware of an education program available to school's through Chief Conley. The District is applying for a grant of \$20K to initiate the program.

Additionally, Ms. Cameron asked about the number of concussions from soccer. Principal Puglisi indicated soccer was becoming more aggressive with head balls and hitting the ground. Ms. Cameron stated, this is an issue for parents to address.

Ms. Weld asked about vaping and how many students had been suspended for vaping. Principal Puglisi indicated 3 students had been suspended and one student was participating in the PASS program in lieu of a suspension.

Ms. Erdmann asked about students screened for suicide and SBRIT – Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment. Principal replied SBRIT started with a conversation, if the student responded yes there were additional questions. The screening is anonymous – the objective is maximizing disclosure without consequences, it is a State required program.

Ms. Fitzgibbon indicated she did not believe students had a clear understanding of harassment. It is a gray area and students need to be educated and develop an understanding of boundaries. Ms. Fitzgibbon also mentioned the Massachusetts Health Youth Act – which may enhance programs already in place.

Mr. Warnock cautioned the Committee about responding to the list of problems without reflecting on the number of resources in place in the District. He suggested it might be useful when presenting information like the Youth Risk Behavior Survey – to highlight the programs in place. For instance, in the presentation slide by slide identify the areas of concern and identify the Programs in place that provide intervention and support.

Ms. Wolf expressed concern for the issue of sleep and thought it may be time to consider changing the start time for High School students. Principal Puglisi stated that would be a Community discussion and likely a highly charged emotional conversation. Ms. Fitzgibbon indicated her reading on the Circadian Rhythm indicated teenagers cannot fall asleep before 11:30 p.m. and require 9-10 hours of sleep. Principal Puglisi stated Newburyport will change school start times next fall, she thought it would be interesting to see how that change progresses.

Survey results will be posted, Ms. Cameron thought the information should be presented to parents in a meeting.

Ms. Erdmann thanked Principal Puglisi and Dr. Collins for their presentation.

➤ FY 20 Tentative Budget Presentation

Prior to Presentation Mr. Urbas reviewed the FY 19 Transfer Request – Mr. Urbas requested the Committee approval the transfer of \$17,406 from the Operating Budget to Salaries Budget.

Ms. Cameron moved to accept the budget transfer as demonstrated, Ms. Wolf seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Urbas presented the FY 20 Tentative Budget. The first slide was School Committee Goals and the second slide is FY 20 Budget Goals:

- Develop and deliver a fiscally responsible budget that maintains educational quality, supports 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 and Serve increasingly diverse student educational needs.
- Exercise fiscal responsibility – See internal efficiencies to offset growth needs when possible.
- Meet local, state and federal responsibilities while controlling growth.

Additional Considerations in Developing the FY 20 Budget:

- Student Needs
- Special Education
- Fixed Costs
- Facilities

FY 20 Operating Budget Overview:

- Initial goal is to provide Level Services at a minimum – Maintain same level of program currently in place – Due to funding constraints, essential program changes to be funded via identification of efficiencies/restructuring opportunities – Cuts made in FY 19 have not been restored.
- Level funded most categories in FY 20 Tentative Budget, with some exceptions: Employee compensation and mandated benefits – Transportation and Utilities.
- Level services budget exceeds available funding, but target is achievable: Current projected deficit of \$350-\$400K is smaller than this time last year, as insurance picture has stabilized – Plan taking shape to bring FY 20 budget in line with available resources.
- FY 20 Operating Budget Drivers – Health Insurance: Assumed rate increase of 8%, in line with market trend, as MERSD’s utilization has stabilized – Collaborative bargaining process on track to yield additional savings.
- Compensation: 2.5% COLA acknowledges low growth rate in recent years – Data-informed decision-making on compensation, using statewide information.
- Utilities: Recent contract renewals have increased roughly 10%, another by-product of strong economy.
- Transportation: 7% contractual increase for regular day transportation, reflecting national trend and “full employment” in economy – Many Districts statewide facing shortages and rising rates – After 4-year average annual increase for MERSD contract of 0.5%, the average growth for FY 18-FY 20 has been closer to 12%. Bid option to renew in FY 21 at 2.5%, so horizon is in sight.

FY 20 Budget Overview

- FY 20 Tentative Operating Budget – \$26.07M – 3.25% (\$821K) increase from FY 19 budget – Relies on \$380K of yet-to-be-finalized spending efficiencies/reductions – By contrast FY 19 Tentative Budget gap was \$900K.

- FY 20 Operating Assessment Increase = 3.30% -- Measures cost increase to Towns after deducting "Other Revenue" (e.g., State Aid) from spending needs – In line with recent assessment increases of 3.29% (FY 19), 3.20% (FY 18) and 3.32% (FY 17).
- FY 20 Capital Budget will be impacted by Memorial School project – FY 20 MSHS debt service of \$2.054M is \$54K less than FY 19 (2.6% decline) – MERSD working with both Towns to develop borrowing schedule for \$40M district share of new Manchester Memorial Elementary School.

Budget Highlights: Revenue

- 2.9% growth in non-assessment revenue is closer to spending rate (3.25%) leading to narrowing gap between spending and Town Assessment growth (3.30%) – Assume 2.1% growth in Chapter 70 (\$63K) – Increased Regional Transportation 7.7% (\$10K) to reflect recent historical trend – Assume \$50K slight decline in School Choice revenue (to \$325K) to account for graduations.

Budget Highlights: Largest Expenditures

- Personnel (65.4% of total) – 2.5% recognizes MERSD compensation has not kept pace with other Districts in State – MERSD teacher salaries below statewide average and peer Districts – Staff collaborated with District to share burden of rising health insurance costs, include OPEB – With step increases, total personnel expenditures up 4.1% -- No FTE increase – prior year FTE cuts retained.
- Insurance & Pension with OPEB (19.8%) – 8% estimated growth in line with market; new plans expected to yield additional, unbudgeted savings – Mandated retiree insured headcount now = active employees insured – On track for \$2.3M in total contributions to OPEB Trust through FY 20.
- Maintenance (6.3%) – Budget reflects rising utility rates, despite recent energy efficiency grants/investments at EES and MSHS – Facilities capital remains cut to \$60K, below recommended level to address needs of retained buildings.
- Out-of-District (OOD) Tuitions (2.9%) – FY 20 student needs and cost in line with FY 19, but Tentative FY 20 increase of \$129K reflects reduced prepayments.
- Transportation (3.1%) – Stable OOD picture leads to forecasted decline in special ed transportation, despite rising rates, which will offset 7% increase (\$40K) in bid rate for regular transportation.

Closing Remaining Budget Gap

- Options to close remaining budget gap include: Health Insurance – \$175K – new plans identified in discussion with META – in reality this is a State and National problem.
- Out-of-District – \$80K – Increase prepayments to prior year levels – Staffing – \$125K Attrition and declining enrollment allow for savings without impact to program – Additional efficiencies /restructuring to be dedicated to restoration of prior year cuts.

Next Steps

- First FY 20 Budget Hearing – December 12, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. – Second FY 20 Budget Hearing – January 29, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.
- Fine Tuning – December – January – Check assumptions and projections – Identify areas for generating funds to meet unmet needs – Meet with Town Boards if needed – Finalize Budget – School Committee, February 5, 2019 at 6:00 p.m.

9) Public Comment – There was no public comment this evening.

10) Adjourn

Mr. Warnock moved to adjourn the School Committee Business meeting, Ms. Wolf seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.