

*Filed subject to approval*

EASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Budget Workshop  
Helen Keller Middle School – Learning Commons  
Thursday, January 17, 2019  
7:30 pm

ATTENDANCE:

Easton Board of Education: Parker, Chieda, Hicks, Reed, Shortt

Absent: Bindelglass

Administration: McMorran, Pierson Ugol, Reiss, Twiss, Visners, Brownstein, Fox, Kaplan, Mohr

Members of the Public: 6 members of the public

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Parker called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

None.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION: CONSIDERATION OF 2019-2020 PROPOSED BUDGET

Dr. McMorran stated the goals of the evening's meeting were to:

1. Take the Board through the proposed budget's object decreases and increases as outlined in the "Proposed 2019-2020 Budget by Object Analysis" memo (dated 1/17/19).
2. Present the Special Education Programming

The budget can be looked at in terms of the different objects that run across the different chapters of the budget. This view shows why the budget is going up in some parts and going down in other parts. There are two themes running through the budget:

1. Contractual obligations are pushing costs up.
2. Special Ed has areas of increases (i.e. purchasing services that cannot be provided in-house) and other areas of decreases (i.e. building capacity in-house).

Dr. McMorran and the Board reviewed and discussed objects which will cost less in the coming year (see handout, p 1-2 for full list and explanations). Dr. McMorran highlighted:

Student Transportation	-\$160,569
Other Professional Services	- \$85,690
Substitutes Certified	-\$15,400

Tuition Private School	-\$14,103
Tuition Reimbursement	-\$11,800

Dr. McMorran and the Board reviewed and discussed the object variances that are at zero (see handout, p 2 for full list and explanations). They expect these objects to have the same cost in the coming year (i.e. disposal, snow plowing, life insurance, magnet school tuition). The complete list is outlined in the handout.

Dr. McMorran and the Board reviewed and discussed the proposed object variances that are less than \$20,000 (see handout, p 2-3 for the full list and explanations). The following objects were highlighted and discussed as some of the costs are driving the budget:

Dr. McMorran stated part of the increase in standardized testing is for Dibels Assessment at the elementary school. Dr. Pierson Ugol further explained the program would be purchased to allow teachers to do data analysis, create graphs, set goals, and plot the students' progress. It falls in the category of analyzing data.

There were questions and discussion about the increased dues and fees object. Part of the increase represents taxes for fire district, boiler and elevator. Mr. Reiss commented that taxes went up in Easton, including for schools, this year due to the large Aquarion water assessment.

There was an inquiry about the new solar panels at SSES. Mr. Reiss responded that he did not take any benefit from the solar panels due to the project being delayed.

Mr. Parker asked what is driving the increase of the software? Dr. McMorran noted the proposed software increase is for licensing fees that support the technology plan. Mr. Reiss also noted that, for at least one item, the cost in '18-19 was only for a partial year. It will be budgeted for a full year cost in the coming year.

There was a discussion about the proposed conference and travel object. Dr. McMorran advised the Board supporting the merit of developing the staff is something for the Board to deliberate.

Mr. Parker asked how conference and travel is tracked. Dr. McMorran provided examples.

Mrs. Chieda asked when putting the budget together, how are they determined and what is the value at looking at the previous year? Dr. McMorran responded that the school system is more than 100 years old. We look at it one year at a time. The budgets reflect decisions that were made over a long period of time. The goal is to try to find the balance between what we think we need to do a good job and what the town can afford. Dr. Pierson Ugol added when they look at conference and travel, they also look at upcoming changes and new requirements. What's the best way to do this? Do we bring someone in or go externally to train? We also look at the year before to see what we were not able to do or did we do an adequate job with x?

Mrs. Shortt stated that it is hard to quantify the value added from professional development.

Dr. McMorran stated now, we are able to manage the budget due to the decline in enrollment. The budget is an itemized, best estimate at a reasonable cost, but it is not the price tag. Do we increase class size, do we put off capital cost, do we replace technology? A lot of the budget is necessary due to contract obligations.

Dr. McMorran and the Board reviewed and discussed the proposed object variances that are greater than \$20,000 (see handout, p 3-5 for the full list and explanations). The following objects were highlighted:

Dr. McMorran noted that big variances are human resources related. Certified salary is up. Most of the drive is due to people climbing the ladder. Most are contractual obligations for the 90 certified teachers. It also includes the proposal for a STIC Coordinator (Science Technology Instructional Coach) and degree changes.

Dr. McMorran noted they are doing a better job in-house with projecting the need for medical insurance for non-certified staff.

Under capital improvements, Dr. McMorran noted that there is a full list of capital improvements in the budget document. He highlighted they were directed to take out the oil tank at HKMS. The Fire Marshall has directed them to replace the doors to the Media Center. Other highlighted items include repaving the basketball court (safety) and installing a high efficiency A/C unit for two classrooms. At SSES, the proposal includes an emergency exit for the K-2 playground area, repaving/repainting parts of the parking lot, and two heaters to protect two rooms.

**Motion: move that the Easton Board of Education take a five minute recess. Hicks, Parker. Approved, 5-0.**

Mr. Parker called the meeting back to order at 8:57 p.m.

The proposed budget includes a request for an additional Special Ed teacher at SSES. Mrs. Twiss presented a Special Education Hours by Teacher report for both SSES and HKMS. The report tracked the teachers IEP hours per week, caseload, evaluations, and PPTs. Mrs. Twiss noted that there is no wiggle room in the teachers' schedules.

Mr. Parker and Mrs. Shortt had questions about the number of paraprofessionals and how they are managed within the Special Ed program. Mrs. Twiss noted several of the paraprofessionals are shared with Redding and Region 9, and both preschool teachers have dual certifications. Teachers prepare and conduct evaluations, annual reviews, initial referrals, and review/revise meetings.

Mrs. Visners presented "a day in the life of a Special Education teacher" schedules for elementary, middle school, elementary speech and language pathologist, and BCBA.

Mr. Parker noted the evaluations are incredibly detailed and time consuming.

Dr. McMorran added that it is a full day, every day for the Special Ed teachers. He hoped the presentations helped the Board see how intensive and full their days are.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Carolyn Oppenheim, Hunting Ridge Road – Ms. Oppenheim shared Special Ed is a big topic of conversation for the budget. Her concern is for the Board to look at Special Ed beyond the numbers when they are going through the budget process.

Tim Brady, Center Road – Mr. Brady shared his concerns for CT towns being financially stressed to pay for teachers' pensions, Easton's mill rate and home values. He asked the Board to consider requesting money from the state.

#### BOARD MEMBER COMMENT:

Mrs. Shortt thanked the presenters for their presentations.

Mr. Parker noted that the budget planning is not going to be easy. There are hard questions that need to be answered. The focus will remain kids first. He understands the problems that are driven by the state and they will do their best going forward.

Dr. McMorran added the budget is a process. A large amount of the budget pushes itself. A conservative 2.5% increase in cost is zero. We need to find the place where we are and what the town can afford to support. The variance at the moment is \$1m. We are trying to find the lowest reasonable cost, not the least responsible cost.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**Motion: move that the meeting be adjourned. Chieda, Reed. Approved, 5-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Submitted by Jenny Chieda, Easton Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by Christine DiDomenico