

Special Meeting
Easton Board of Education
Budget Workshop Agenda
HKMS Library Media Center
Monday, January 30, 2017- 7:30pm

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CHRISTINE HALLORAN
TOWN CLERK
EASTON CT

ATTENDANCE

Board of Education: Bindelglass (Arrived at 8:38pm), Bobroske, Parker, Shortt, Chieda, Hicks
Administration: McMorran, Pierson Ugol, Edwards, Fox Santora, Brownstein, Kaplan, Burke
Others: Approximately 14 members of the public were in attendance

Mr. Parker called the meeting to order at 7:31 pm

PUBLIC COMMENT

N/A

BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

N/A

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

2017-2018 Operating Budget

Dr. McMorran reported on the 2017-2018 proposed Operating Budget. He noted that the questions he would be addressing today were previously submitted to him, by the Board, in response to his preliminary informational Operating Budget presentation. McMorran reported that the overarching concept that the Administration adheres to is to personalize learning that pushes individual students to strive, without causing anxiety. He noted that today's pedagogy aims to vary input to standardize output, versus historical pedagogical thought which standardized input which caused varied output. Dr. McMorran referenced a diagram depicting the SRBI, Scientific Research Based Intervention which is mandated by the State of Connecticut. Tier One is general instruction in the classroom by classroom teachers, Tier Two is extra instruction and time with Para-professionals, and Tier Three in Intensive Individual Support with a certified teacher. Initial development goals in Tier Two and Three are in six to eight week intervals. One goal of this model is to make the standard time and effort, not native intelligence. Previously, Dr. McMorran had reported on the six main sections of the budget:

- General Instruction 48.02%
- Special Education 22%
- Operations and Grounds 17.71%
- Administration 10.65%
- Academics 1.31%
- Athletics and Co-Curricular Programs 0.32%

During this meeting, Dr. McMorran focused on Board Questions in the following main areas:

- Software Costs and Maintenance Contracts
- Open Choice Tuition
- Faculty Roles & Class Size
- The Role of Paraprofessionals
- Secretarial Staff
- Special Education "Contingency" and Costs

Regarding Software costs, the apparent increase is partially due to moving costs from object 649 to 735. Online Subscriptions have been aligned with middle school curricular needs. Susan Kaplan noted that added programs and costs are due to cost increases and required and helpful software. The Administration only uses software

that complies with student privacy rules. Ms. Kaplan will provide information on where items were switched between buckets in order to more accurately account for their purpose/use.

A list of maintenance contracts was distributed and discussed. Mr. Parker asked that the Board receive more information on maintenance that had to be hired out, that the custodial staff could not provide.

Dr. McMorran then gave a brief overview of state funding for Open Choice Students. There will be an adjustment made from \$40,000 anticipated reimbursement to \$50,000. The Administration recommends this adjustment.

Kim Fox spoke to the Boards questions of how many sections should be in the 5th and 2nd grades next year. Mr. Parker asked for more empirical data to support the benefits of having smaller classes. Ms. Fox says that having the added section on the 2nd/5th grade levels would allow for better accommodation of the schools instructional model. The "3,2,1" strategy currently employed by teachers is difficult to implement with a class size of 21 or 22. The staff and Administration also are concerned about behavioral issues and management in the larger class size option.

The Board and Administration discussed that no further cuts could be made to music program staff.

The Administration recommended that the Board approve the addition of a Director of Technology. Mr. Parker asked that we look into adding this position.

Dr. McMorran reviewed the current nurse staffing requirements and needs. There is a stipend for nurses and an increase for nurse substitutes.

Ms. Kaplan then addressed the staff's recommendation that HKMS allow for students to get outdoor supervised recess. She could not overstate the value of an outside break for students. Currently there is no room in scheduling for current staff to cover this need. A proposal for a recess paraprofessional was brought to the Board. Ms. Bobroske asked that the Administration find alternative ways to give the students a "break" during the school day. The Board discussed the importance of a break for students during the day.

Dr. McMorran addressed the question of whether or not the Pre-School program could run with one teacher and two paraprofessionals. The staff and administration presented the reasons why two sections need to remain, due to state regulations.

Ms. Fox addressed why it is necessary to have 3 reading paraprofessionals in addition to the two literacy specialists and a remedial reading teacher.

Dr. McMorran spoke to the breakdown of general education paraprofessionals' responsibilities in the two schools.

Staff then presented on the roles of the Academic Mentor, Math Specialist and Literacy Specialist at HKMS. They noted that the Academic Mentor is a member of faculty who works with identified students on personal management, academic preparation, and self-regulation skill development. The two specialists are for the continuous improvement of the literacy, literature and math programs. Staff and Administration recommend both all positions remain.

Dr. McMorran and staff then answered the Board's inquiry into how many secretaries and administrative staff were necessary. It was recommended by staff and Administration that they do not reduce the current staffing from 4 to 3. They believe timeliness and service would suffer, and there are also safety concerns.

Two necessary increases in Psychology and Speech Services were addressed. The increase is due to the need to update the test protocols for assessments regularly administered, staff can no longer use the outdated versions.

The Board asked the Administration and staff to explain why they are asking for a special education contingency of \$69,550. Ms. Edwards explained that the current Special Education budget is based on current enrollment, but we cannot know if additional students in-house will become eligible, or if one or more students with an IEP will move into town. Ms. Bobroske asked that they provide evidence based data to support this ask, and that staff try to remove or alter the “contingency” based nature of this budget item.

Ms. Edwards reported on the continued, but diminished need for the Center for Children with Special Needs. The decision to retain the CCSN is based as much on anticipated needs for students within the program and their unique IEPs as it is on our growing internal capacity. There was discussion around the benefits and presence of this service. Ms. Edwards continued on to address the number of special education paraprofessionals the proposed budget calls for. She stated that the number of paraprofessionals we put in the budget is based on IEP Service Needs.

Due to the late hour, Mr. Parker requested that Ms. Edwards present her full budget report at the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Amy Zimma, Silver Hill Road, stated that she supports adding the sixth section to next year’s 5th grade because it will benefit all students, including talented and gifted students, not just Tier II and Tier III. She also reiterated that she believes outdoor recess is a necessity for the students, and that the community should support the effort to provide it.

Diane Roden stated that she has a 5th grader and believes that recess is a necessity.

Gretchen Goldstein, Brianna Lane also voiced the importance of recess.

Celeste D’Angeles, Virginia Drive, added that she believes recess is necessary, and that PE is not recess.

BOARD COMMENT

Dr. Bindelglass asked if a volunteer could oversee recess, the answer was “no, it needs to be a staff member for legal purposes.

Ms. Shortt reiterated that recess is necessary for the students’ wellbeing.

Ms. Chieda asked if the lunch hour was sufficient time to have recess. Staff answered yes, and that they only have outdoor recess if it 20 degrees or above.

Motion: move to adjourn the meeting 9:55pm. Shortt, Bobroske. Approved. Unanimous.