

Minutes
Watertown Board of Education
Budget & Finance Subcommittee Meeting
Thursday, January 30th, 2020 – 6:15 p.m.
Watertown High School
Lecture Hall

Members Present: Diane Bristol, Chairman, Budget & Finance Committee
Cathie Rinaldi, Committee Member
Leslie Crotty, Committee Member
Tom Lambert, Committee Member
Janelle Wilk, Committee Member

Members Absent: Josephine Cavallo - Rosa, Committee Member

Others Present: Dr. Rydell Harrison, Superintendent of Schools
Tom DiStasio, Business Manager

1. Convene Meeting

Ms. Bristol, Chairman of the Committee, convened the meeting and immediately turned the meeting over to Mr. DiStasio.

2. Budget Discussion and Objectives for the Fiscal Year, 2020-2021

Dr. Harrison – We want to note that we still have some work to do and some changes to make but the big drivers at this point are that we are looking to offer a retirement incentive to teachers and we worked with the Teacher’s Union president to get a list of names of who she thought may be interested and we have a list of about 14 names. That is a proposed savings of about \$347,000.

Mr. DiStasio – That amount may be larger with what we talked about today. With 14 proposed retirements, there are some positions that may not need to be replaced. So that being the case, the estimated savings in year one is \$546,000.

Dr. Harrison – Tom will walk us through the document and we spent a lot of time on it yesterday and today I had some follow up discussions at Swift and looking at some scheduling pieces that I feel will create more flexibility. I am scheduled to meet with the high school for the same reason tomorrow. So here is where we are as of right now.

Mr. DiStasio – I will go through the larger lines, not through them all, as you can see them here. If you look at the principals/asst. principals line, there are increases that are contractual and one person that went from a principal to administration, so there is that increase as well. The 1.45% increase on the teacher's line has a lot more behind it other than the number. As mentioned, we will save about \$546,000 with the early retirement incentive and we are estimating there are 14 teachers interested. The proposal is based on the one from five years ago and would have a contribution to each person's retirement account and their severance package, over the course of three years. Each position, with the exception with the two we mentioned earlier, would be replaced with someone at a step 4 masters. Based on our projections, we are saving the \$546,000 which is offset by contractual increases of \$487,000 as well as a couple of positions that we are looking at adding. Based on conversations with the administrators, we are proposing to address the needs of the district. Included are: 3 SRBI coordinators (47,000 ea.), 1 special education teacher (57,000), social worker (60,000). Those positions are necessary to begin a behavioral program in grades 3-5 to try to keep these students in district within a nonrestrictive environment and making sure their needs are addressed. This program could benefit five students right off the bat which would save a good amount of money in year one. In addition to saving money with outplacements, we are saving money with the number of paras that we would have as the program is better equipped to meet student's needs rather than having to assign them an additional person in a general education classroom. Some additional positions include: a math interventionist (SMS, 28,000), PE/Health teacher with the state statute change (47,000), Special education teacher (SMS, 57,000), a speech teacher (Polk & JTPS, 60,000). Many of these are due to caseloads increasing year over year.

Dr. Harrison – If we look at the 2009/2010 school year, we had 32.3 SPED teachers to serve 350 students. This year we have 30 teachers to serve 410 students, so you can see that number has increased without the number of teachers and that means over time the caseloads get larger.

Mr. DiStasio – A few more positions included in the budget are: 3 security officers (45,000) and one network coordinator (60,000).

Dr. Harrison – So the three security guards will be so that John Trumbull, Polk and Judson will have their own guard with in addition to Chip Scofield and then one guard at night at the high school. This position will help offset some of the money spent to hire officers for evening events as well.

Mr. DiStasio – Moving onto noncertified staff, we have the potential to cut 6 paraprofessionals with the additions of the behavioral programming. There isn't really any more activity in this area, so let me know if you have any questions. With tutoring/homebound, we can potentially reduce this line with the addition of the SRBI and interventionist positions with a savings of \$32,000. We built a small reduction of the substitutes as well and there is a small increase to the coach's line as a result of negotiated rates. The final increase of the salary and wages line will have a 1.78% increase.

In employee benefits there are some increases to social security and Medicare that have to do with the salary increases. Insurance fixed costs will stay the same and we project that claims will increase. With that projection and applying increases associated with copays that our employees pay, our ultimate projection is 7.5 million for this year. Our dental insurance and workman's compensation, we have separate funds for those claims, and based on reviews and claims, we can decrease each line at \$54,000 with workman's comp and \$85,000 on dental. Dental is fairly consistent year over year.

For professional services the line in this category changing would be the professional services line and under that line would be special education and technical services. This line is for providing support for students with autism, behavioral analysts, therapists, professional services to help students meet their needs. These costs rise along with the rise in the special education population and as that population continues to rise, we believe it is appropriate to increase this line.

Moving onto utilities, one thing to point out is the electrical line where we are projecting the savings with the solar panels at the three schools and that savings is offset by projected increases in services. Heating oil and gas are expected to be even usage year over year and with historic rate increases, that is how we build this line.

Onto maintenance services, this category didn't change much on the bottom line. We want to build back up to the contracted services line to build back up to our projects to be completed. (At this time, a listed set of projects to be done was reviewed)

For student transportation, our contractual increase is about 45. Special Ed transportation was increased by \$170,000 and offsetting some of this is the excess cost grant we anticipate receiving from the State of Connecticut.

Property insurance, travel and licensing are fairly consistent. Our insurance for liability is also consistent. There is also money built in for deductibles if claims arise.

Tuition has an increase for Nonnewaug as we had a few more students attend this year vs. last. We also anticipate the same amount coming in from 8th to offset the graduating class. We are projecting a large increase in the special education tuition, as we discussed in Monday's meeting, we have seen those costs increase with programming, and outplacements. Some expenditures will be offset by the excess cost grant. Another thing to note, by increasing our capacity to keep our students in district will help to limit this line and the transportation line increases.

Supplies and materials bring a small increase with some requested by our administrators. There were science supplies requested by the high school and the maintenance and custodial supplies have been increased by some needs that we have there. This line is really in line with what we spend. Items like cleaning supplies and gloves are on this line. A small increase with textbooks with some of the new math instructional items.

We have two students at the academy this year and they are aging out. We don't anticipate any new students going to the academy next year. Our current bottom line projection is \$46,878,244 or a 2.92% increase over the 2019-2020 school year.

3. Adjournment

Mr. Lambert adjourned the meeting at 8:03 p.m.

He then called for a motion to adjourn.

Subject: Motion to Adjourn

Motion Presented by: Ms. Rinaldi

Motion Seconded by: Mr. Lambert

Motion Passed

Respectfully submitted by,

Mindi Davidson

Recording Secretary