

WINCHESTER SCHOOL BOARD WORK SESSION
FORD BUILDING
MARCH 30, 2012

Board Members Present: T. Croteau, E. Jackson, K. Whippie, R. Horton

Administration Present: K. Dassau, J. Lewis, C. Boyle, P. Bigelow, D. Chamberlain, C. Paulin

The meeting was called to order by Chair, T. Croteau at 6:33 pm.

KEENE HIGH SCHOOL TUITIONS:

T. Croteau asked the superintendent to present information on Keene High school billing.

K. Dassau handed out a document showing Keene High School tuition variables, i.e. move-ins, home-schooled, homeless, court orders, drop-outs, re-enrollments, withdrawals, etc.

K. Dassau also handed out the actual Spring 2012 tuition bill without student names. R. Horton asked about students who attend other public high schools such as Hinsdale. K. Dassau explained that they do not appear on this bill. Payments for special education students who go to a different public high school come from the sped public placement budget line. That account was proposed to be cut at the last work session. In addition, some students go to private placements, and that budget line was also proposed to be cut.

R. Horton suggested that the KHS enrollment is smaller than the list they considered in September. K. Dassau explained that it's actually fractions of students because some come and go at various times throughout the year.

R. Horton asked that at a future discussion, they discuss how the KHS daily rate is figured.

R. Horton noticed that enrollment at the elementary school also seems to have declined, which is something that seems to be happening statewide. He wondered why that is. Some discussion followed as to possibilities why.

T. Croteau asked if students who get extra help in just one or two subject areas are considered special education. K. Dassau answered that they are not. Sped students must be identified with a specific disability.

E. Jackson asked if the sped identification of high school students is up to KHS. K. Dassau said it is rare when a high school student is identified.

E. Jackson noticed that 3 regular education students on the list had withdrawn and 3 sped had entered, and wondered if they were the same 3 students. K. Dassau stated that he couldn't say without checking the actual list.

K. Dassau reminded the board that if a special ed student moves in at this point in the year, they are not in this year's budget, nor are they in next year's, so it becomes an unexpected expenditure for which we are obligated.

OTHER BUDGET LINES:

R. Horton questioned the curriculum development line and why we didn't spend that money. P. Bigelow stated that it was because we were able to use grant money. This grant funding is no longer available.

E. Jackson asked if the board could receive grant information.

K. Dassau stated that criminal background checks are required by law, yet that budget line has been proposed to be cut. While the majority of background checks happen at the beginning of the year, they must occur whenever anyone is hired throughout the year.

R. Horton asked why 100% of the balance is left in the current coaches and athletics line. K. Dassau stated it is because we froze that money early in the year.

K. Dassau informed the board that there are several other areas that were not spent due to the frozen budget, and that he would be asking the board to unfreeze the budget at their next meeting.

R. Horton asked about Saturday Academy. J. Lewis explained that it is a program designed to offer extra help for students on Saturdays that we usually offer at about this time of year. We didn't do it this year because of the frozen budget.

R. Horton asked about Fast ForWord. K. Whippie explained that the Board zeroed out that account for next year based on administrative input.

R. Horton asked how transportation is billed. C. Paulin explained that it is billed monthly at a regular rate, in addition to fuel charges.

R. Horton asked about SAU software (BudgetSense) and how that line was budgeted. C. Paulin explained that this is something we share with Hinsdale. We now have a plan and are paying our share of the capital cost and annual maintenance. C. Paulin feels it will stay approximately the same for next year, although there is likely to be some inflationary costs.

E. Jackson asked what we get for our money with BudgetSense. C. Boyle said we get back-up services, updates, maintenance, support, etc.

R. Horton asked what we had in 2010-2011 for software expenses. C. Paulin thought that 2010-2011 was when we paid the first share of our cost. He does not know the total off the top of his head, but can check the contract.

E. Jackson asked about regular transportation. The Winchester School Board had reduced the budget in this area for next year.

E. Jackson asked about the increase in sped transportation to \$390,000. C. Paulin said this was due to the fact that it was under-budgeted this year. He explained that we looked at the bills as to what we pay on a monthly basis. Our special education vendors are late billers, so we are paid through February. Some of the expense depends on the fuel estimator. K. Dassau said we know what students are in sped placements, we figured what it costs now, and tried to allow for some inflation. We re-bid all the routes in August to try to get the best rates. The number is also contingent on students who may move in.

E. Jackson asked about the social security rate and the retirement rate for teachers and non-teachers. C. Paulin verified those numbers.

R. Horton asked about line 1200 52310 non-teacher retirement. E. Jackson commented that it appears to be budgeted at the teacher retirement rate rather than non-teacher. It is for the sped director, who should be at the non-teacher rate.

R. Horton proposed to change the 2500 5100 line to \$60,000, increasing it by \$1500, for a full time business administrator. K. Dassau asked the chair to clarify that this is not a motion. T. Croteau stated that it is not a motion, and that the board will discuss the entire proposal package when we are finished.

R. Horton proposed zeroing out \$32,500 for the payroll/accountant line. K. Whippie responded that having only one person in charge of all of the school's finances invites embezzling. K. Dassau questioned what the contingency plan would be when the one person is sick or on vacation. K. Whippie again stated that this move is fiscally irresponsible. R. Horton responded that we have a treasurer and an auditor. K. Whippie stated that the auditor doesn't audit daily operations, and that it lends to the appearance of impropriety. K. Dassau suggested getting a legal opinion. He is more concerned about the back-up when that person is out. He also reminded the board that if we go down that route, the job descriptions will have to be changed. R. Horton said there was no job description for the accountant. K. Dassau said it is in the procedures manual. There are two descriptions, one for purchasing and accounts payable, and one for payroll.

R. Horton proposed removing all the related benefits to the payroll position.

E. Jackson asked for the average cost of benefits. She figured what we currently have in salary and benefits for the 2 positions. She stated that if we combined the accountant and business manager's position into one and added the benefits, the current budget amount should go from \$105,339 to \$85,834.

T. Croteau asked what C. Paulin's schedule is. He is currently .75 time - 157 days per year or an average of 3 days per week, not counting unpaid vacation time. He works evenings, weekends, sometimes charging for this time, and sometimes not. E. Jackson remarked that he should always charge for his work.

E. Jackson asked if most of the SAU staff works 47 weeks per year. C. Paulin responded that the SAU is open and staffed 52 weeks per year.

R. Horton asked K. Whippie if he would prefer one full-time business manager or 2 part-time people. K. Whippie responded that he feels the payroll/accountant position should be full time to serve the staff when daily needs arise. We could negotiate with the business manager. He would not choose either of R. Horton's options as he does not think 2 part-time people would serve the district well.

C. Paulin stated that he feels it is better to have the separation of duties in the business office so they are not both handling everything. If you ask the business manager to take over accountant's duties, that person should get half the value of the other position. For the most effective use of time and security reasons, C. Paulin feels that the 2 skill sets are more important to have, plus it provides the needed coverage.

T. Croteau asked how much time payroll takes during the week. C. Paulin explained that it isn't just payroll. It's retirement, processing, etc. It takes a few days, more intensive on payroll weeks (every other week).

K. Whippie expressed his fear that a part-time person would be consumed with payroll responsibilities on those weeks and not be able to attend to accounts payable.

E. Jackson stated that we could hire a payroll company for those days. C. Paulin stated that he has not ever seen payroll companies do school payrolls well.

K. Whippie added that a given employee may come from different line items including grants, etc., and those hours need to be tracked accordingly. It is more complicated. C. Paulin agreed, stating that this is why he has not seen outside companies do this for schools.

E. Jackson asked how many people are paid out of grants. K. Dassau stated that there were several, including all of our ACCESS staff.

R. Horton stated that he did not know we take care of ACCESS payroll. E. Jackson asked if we were their fiscal agent. C. Paulin explained that their grant comes directly to the school, so we manage it completely, including payroll.

T. Croteau asked for more explanation about grant-funded positions. K. Dassau explained that we have to use district money first, and then we bill the grant.

R. Horton changed his previous proposal to change the business administrator line to \$50,000 (3 days a week at \$40 per hour) and the accountant line to \$20,300 (25 hours per week at the current salary) with zero benefits. He also proposed changing the social security line to \$5378.

K. Whippie expressed his concern that 3 days a week is not enough for the business administrator. He stated that filling this position the first time was a challenge. E. Jackson asked for T. Croteau's input. T. Croteau said he agrees that the person needs to roll in prior to July 1 so that we are not left without a business manager.

R. Horton asked for bottom line at this point: C. Paulin figured we were at \$571,017 in cuts and need to get to \$675,000.

T. Croteau asked about the readiness position line. K. Dassau stated that the \$50,000 in that line includes all the benefits, but it is just a placeholder. It depends on what contractual step the person hired for that position would be on.

T. Croteau asked Mr. Lewis how he feels about the loss of Saturday Academy. Mr. Lewis said it's yet another opportunity for children, but if we can't have it, we can't.

T. Croteau asked about the information access fee. C. Boyle explained how e-rate allows us to do discounted billing. There are 2 options, running a credit or asking for a rebate check at the end of the year. This year we got a credit. C. Boyle stated that we need to budget as if the e-rate does not exist in case it doesn't come through. If we opted for the rebate check, it comes the following year as a revenue, so either way it needs to be budgeted.

T.Croteau asked about the amount of e-rate. C. Boyle said it's hard to know how much we get because this is the first year we've gone with the credit. He has been able to negotiate with our vendor and he is comfortable reducing the internet access fees by \$5000, from \$16,000 down to \$11,000.

T.Croteau asked where e-rate shows up on the revenue side. C.Paulin said it is not revenue, it's a reduction on the expense side. The vendor gets paid directly by e-rate, and we get billed at a zero rate.

T.Croteau proposed changing the internet access fee line to \$11,000.

T.Croteau asked about computer equipment. C.Boyle explained that he had hoped to buy some new equipment to replace old equipment. T. Croteau wondered if it would make sense to replace some of it now with the fund balance. C. Boyle agreed. K. Dassau stated that he would be asking the board to make other purchases as well once we unfreeze the current budget.

K. Whippie had several recommendations (including some already made or exceeded at the previous work session) for potential cuts. He will hand a complete list of his recommendations to Mr. Paulin.

- \$5000 out of GED
- \$1000 out of sped evaluations
- \$1500 out of sped legal
- \$1800 out of board secretary and related social security and benefits
- Bring board legal expenses down to \$6000 (an additional \$1000 from previous proposal). T. Croteau asked how much we have spent so far, and K. Dassau said it would be close to the budgeted amount.
- Zero out board recognition and awards, but after discussion agreed to reduce it to \$500.
- Cut insurance bid services to zero. Some discussion followed. K. Whippie thinks we could take it out for a year since our rates actually decreased this year.
- Reduce SAU travel to \$500.
- Eliminate athletic transportation and field trips.
- Cut regular ed aides to zero, which eliminates the ISS aide.
- Cut the substitute line to \$10,000.
- Remove all funding for supplies from instructional categories.
- Zero instrument repairs, music supplies, books & magazines, equipment, and dues & fees.
- Zero science, social studies, and reading improvement supplies
- Cut general supplies \$20,000.
- Cut the \$497 and \$415 for books and printed matter and other special ed supplies.
- Zero coaches' salaries and related benefits.
- Officials, athletic supplies, and all athletics – zero.
- Curriculum development – zero.
- Media assistant – zero.
- Library purchased services – reduce by \$1000 and reduce the 56410 line for books by \$4000.
- Cut \$1200 from administrative supplies.
- Zero administrative dues and fees unless it's contractual. If so, reduce to \$650.
- Repairs and maintenance – do NOT reduce.
- Replacement furniture – zero.

- Telephone - reduce to \$17,500.

K. Dassau suggested that if we end up handing in the MS22 late, we will not be the only school district to do so.

K. Whippie stated that he did not want to add up everything now, and that the members would be better off taking some time to process everything.

T. Croteau wondered if C. Paulin could plug in all the numbers and email the proposed cuts to board members early next week so that they will be able to go through each line at Thursday's meeting and discuss as needed.

C. Paulin suggested that he could create multiple lines so that board members can have different columns to compare.

T. Croteau asked if there were any other suggestions to be made at this time.

R. Horton proposed cutting \$28,200 out of the tech director's position and reduce it to a part-time position at 30 hours per week. K. Whippie reminded the board that this cut would also lower the revenues that Mr. Boyle brings to the school.

R. Horton proposed cutting the \$2,000 currently in the budget for the tech director's option out of benefits, and reduce all other benefits related to that position.

K. Whippie expressed his concern that this is not the way to reward an employee who has brought revenues into the school, including e-rate discounts, and has done a good job for the school district.

E. Jackson asked who does the technical work, not counting the director part of the job. C. Boyle said he does both the director's position and technical support. It is not exactly 50/50, because he has to do what is needed when it is needed. He is often called in before or after hours, and occasionally even on vacation days. It is a year-round position. E. Jackson asked if summer was less busy. C. Boyle responded that it is often busier, as computers need to be moved, machines need to be set up, there is end-of-year reporting to do, etc.

K. Whippie stated again that for what he does in relation to what it costs the district, we would be foolish to cut his position.

T. Croteau asked how much time Mr. Boyle spends in Hinsdale. C. Boyle said it varies from week to week. There is a lot he can do remotely, over the phone, and working with Hinsdale's tech director. Hinsdale has both a full-time tech director and a full-time tech support position. Mr. Boyle manages the portal WebSense for Hinsdale.

T. Croteau mentioned the possibility of pulling out of Hinsdale and paying Mr. Boyle \$55,000 to work full time just for us. K. Whippie argued that if we mess with the areas that we are working in partnership with Hinsdale, we might end up destroying other areas as well.

K. Dassau stated we should not be negotiating Mr. Boyle's position in public.

K. Whippie suggested that if we followed Mr. Croteau's suggestion, we would be asking Mr. Boyle to do all the work minus the little he does for Hinsdale for a significant pay cut, at the same time that we'd be losing revenue from Hinsdale.

T.Croteau countered that if we were not paying so much money in the first place, we wouldn't need the revenue. C.Paulin stated that the taxpayers will pick up the difference if Mr. Boyle's time at Hinsdale only costs us \$5000 and we gain \$20,000 in revenue. We would be shooting ourselves in the foot to strip out the revenue in order to save an expense.

R. Horton proposed making a cut in line 51101 2320 - SAU administrative assistant – to reduce it by \$9,000 and reduce the related Social Security by \$688 and related teacher retirement by \$792.

R. Horton proposed reducing line 2840 52310 - retirement for tech director - by \$4118.

R. Horton asked for a bottom line at this point. C. Paulin advised that the total budget is down to \$10,884,887.

T.Croteau asked if was legal to go into nonpublic for an employee issue. After private consultation with K. Dassau, this request was dropped.

E. Jackson MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 PM; seconded by K. Whippie, VOTED: 4-0, MOTION PASSED.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Bigelow
Assistant Principal