

BUDGET / FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

Thursday, February 21, 2013

Oliver Administration Building

Present

Subcommittee: Susan Rancourt, Chair, Marjorie McBride and Paul Silva

School Committee, Administration and Staff: Diana Campbell, John Saviano, Melinda Thies, Mario Andrade, and Pauline Silva

Guests: Ed Stuart (7:30 p.m.), Timothy Sweeney, Antonio Teixeira and Eric Dickervitz

Absent: John Bento

Susan Rancourt, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM.

Susan R. thanked town members in attendance for being part of the budget process. She stated the purpose of the meeting was to get feedback and to have a good dialogue.

Melinda T. thanked everyone for coming out and began her presentation introducing the handout of the Powerpoint presentation of the Budget narrative that was given at last night's School Committee meeting. She stated that this was the understory of the budget process. Typically, in years past, a lot of information was disseminated in one sitting and so it was felt that providing a narrative would help to parse out the information giving us opportunity to have conversations before presentation to the Joint Finance Committee. Melinda T. also mentioned that the new regulations now require that we present a narrative.

Melinda T. stated that this budget process is long term and began in 2011 as a result of the funding formula that went into effect on June 23, 2010. Bristol Warren was the greatest loser in the entire state with a \$704,504 reduction in state revenue. This number is fluid because we don't know if categorical aid will continue which is what compelled us to develop a protection plan for the district that also protects the towns of Bristol and Warren. As part of this protection plan, we began streamlining without impacting student outcomes. To help us in this process, we have been working with the District Management Council (DMC) a think tank that works with entities to help them determine how they can deliver a quality product with limited resources. The district then developed a protection plan which has built within it a cycle to constantly assess programs by reassessing to look at outcomes, planning and redesign,

implementing and then reassessing again. The district then began looking at their organizational structure for shared efficiencies whereby we partnership with local entities working toward the same ends to save money. Some of those partnerships include Interlocal Trust, statewide transportation, and statewide food services. The next area of the protection plan involves sacrifice. In 2011 and 2012, the district had voluntary administrative salary freezes. The district also recently ratified two contracts which were very concessionary with zero increases over a three year period and healthcare that was modified to now include a high deductible. These changes account for the large savings we are now experiencing. The district then looked at redesign and how they can do better with the savings to benefit other areas.

Over the years, the district has trended down with a reduction in staff while Bristol Warren's enrollment stayed basically consistent from 2007-2013. However, in the last two years, enrollments have shifted from 2008-2012 when elementary had grown by 149 students, but the middle level had decreased by 59 students and the high school had decreased by 92 students. Due to the increase at the elementary level, the district now has different needs where the focus will be at this level.

Much thought went into how the district streamlined allowing considerable cost savings. The following are some of the ways we have streamlined up to this point and moving forward through

redesign and reallocation. In FY11, the high school moved to consolidate departments where they worked collaboratively. In FY12 we instituted some collaborative classrooms. In FY13 two contracts were ratified where the district realized the biggest savings. In FY14, the district will reduce one administrator, but will add four elementary teachers, two special education teachers, expand collaborative classrooms and add a full-time athletic director. In the future, state assessments will be conducted yearly and will be delivered online for grades 3-8 and eventually expanding to the high school. As a result, the district is looking to expand technologically.

Pauline S. presented the numbers for local revenues as follows: FY11 showed an increase of 2% - approximately \$500,000 which was offset by a 4.73% reduction in state aid due to the first year of the funding formula; FY12 showed an increase of 5.3% - approximately \$800,000, the increase in state revenue not budgeted because \$517,000 was not known about until June.; FY13 showed an increase of 2.25% - approximately \$333,000 with a state reduction of 4.15% - \$784,000.

Pauline S. stated that for FY14 the district is coming in with a budget lower than last year and began her presentation of the hard numbers of the budget with the following:

FY13 Budget (General Fund only) - \$50,757,598

FY14 Continue as is (base is lower by \$525,012 due to settlement of CBA's)

The district will be cutting nine full time employees, but adding eight full time employees (reflective of the enrollment shift).

Tony T. asked what the K-5 ratios are per classroom. Melinda T. responded that there were two classrooms that had 28 students and currently there is no classroom under 22 students.

Pauline S. continued by going over the Budget Comparison/Proposal which reflect total salaries going up less than 1%; total benefits going up less than 1/2%; purchased services - reduction of 7.44%; supplies - reduction of 6.14% (a majority of which comes from a new contract with Direct Energy which will reduce our costs by a third). This reduction in no way effects items pertaining to students; equipment – increase of 8.76% to accommodate technology advances; other – decrease of 5.35% (these are related to memberships, fees and dues of which some allow district to compete in interscholastic programs.); expenditures – reduction of 0.59%; debt services – 0.49%; total reduction -0.56%. For FY14, Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA), requests we report all funds on a budgetary basis in summary style. In FY15 we will be required to give a detailed report.

Pauline S. summarized the revenue side of the Preliminary Budget – All Funds for FY14 stating that there will be a 1% increase on what was assessed to us last year and then highlighted the expenditure

side.

Tony T. asked what the amount per pupil is dedicated to debt service.

Pauline S. responded it is currently \$800 per pupil which, when removed from our total per pupil along with retiree benefits, puts us right at the state average.

Pauline S. went over the Detail of Revenue Projections highlighting enrollments used for allocation to member towns which showed the following: FY13 Bristol 63.56% of the whole and Warren 36.44% of the whole; FY14 Bristol 65.36% of the whole and Warren 34.64% of the whole. Pauline S. noted that Bristol has a greater percent increase compared to last year of 3.85% due to enrollment increase as well as decrease in state aid.

Pauline S. stated this budget is based on what was appropriated by the JFC last year.

Melinda T. stated what was discussed this evening will be part of the Joint Finance Committee presentation. The district has done hard work protecting Bristol and Warren by being good stewards with Bristol Warren Region School District's funds.

Susan R. reminded everyone with a quote by a parent that we "can't cut our way to success". She stated that we did a good job of cutting what they could without impacting student outcomes and adding

where necessary and have still come up with a budget that is less than last year which is very commendable. Susan R. said there will be a Budget Subcommittee Meeting to approve Bristol Warren Regional School District budget as presented this evening on Monday, February 25th and it will then go on to the School Committee for their approval that same night. Once the budget is approved, due to enabling legislation, the Joint Finance Committee has 30 days to approve. Susan R. said that a lot of JFC members were missing from our meeting tonight and asked those town council members present what the district can do to make sure things go smoothly when this goes before the JFC. She encouraged those present that once they've digested this evening's information, to come back and ask any questions. Pauline S. reiterated that she is open to sharing and answering any questions. Melinda T. stated that she would like to have a response from Bristol and Warren before going to the JFC. Susan R. then asked Tony T. if the district's budget fits in with the Town of Bristol's budget. Tony T. responded that they are going through their budget now and will respond with more conversation when the town's budget has been solidified. He understands the timeliness of this matter. Susan R. also mentioned that Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA) does comparisons of district's budgets within the state and would be a good resource to see how fiscally responsible Bristol has been. She then invited everyone to the district-wide open house on March 5th.

Ed Stuart commented that he was encouraged to hear of the

approach of reallocation.

Paul Silva asked those members of the JFC present to begin the process of scheduling Joint Finance Committee Meetings.

Adjournment:

MOTION: At 8:38 p.m. Paul S. made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Marj M. seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

kd