

Cumberland Public Schools

Office of the School Committee
2602 Mendon Road, Cumberland, RI 02864
401/658-1600 Fax. No. 401/658-4620

Lisa A. Beaulieu, Chairperson
Raymond Salvatore, Vice Chairperson
William J. Dennen, Clerk

Paul DiModica
Craig Duffy
Mark Fiorillo
Linda G. Teel

MINUTES APPROVED – 3/24/2016

Minutes

A special meeting of the Cumberland School Committee was held on Thursday, March 17, 2016, at the Cumberland High School Transitional Building, District Meeting Center-T319, 2602 Mendon Road, Cumberland, R.I., at 6:30PM

Call to order by: Lisa Beaulieu at 6:35pm

Committee present: Lisa Beaulieu, William Dennen, Paul DiModica, Mark Fiorillo, Raymond Salvatore, Linda Teel

Committee absent: Craig Duffy

Admin present: Robert Mitchell, Superintendent
Tony DiManna, Assistant Superintendent
Alex Prignano, Business Manager
Tina Fogell, HR Director

Agenda Item #1: Chairperson Convenes Meeting

Chairwoman Beaulieu called the meeting to order at 6:35pm.

Agenda Item #2: Pledge of Allegiance

Agenda Item #3: Approval of Agenda

Mr. DiModica made a motion to approve the agenda, 2nd Mr. Salvatore.

Motion approved 6-0. Mrs. Beaulieu noted that Mr. Duffy was absent, as he was traveling.

Agenda Item #4: Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

Agenda Item #5: Discussion of FY 2017 Superintendent's Budget

Mr. Mitchell began by giving an overview of his goals and ideas for the upcoming budget. He praised the support from the administrative leadership team in working on the budget. He said the district had been facing a \$4M budget gap for the coming year.

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Mr. Mitchell said that his budget includes the following:

- Make STEM and STEAM a priority
 - Governor Raimondo has set a goal to have computer science in every public school in the state by December 2017.
 - Continue with Project Lead the Way Biomedical Science Pathway.
 - Create 3 STEM literacy coordinator positions in elementary schools, who would work with teachers and students on STEM-related opportunities. The plan is to use the Boston Museum of Science curriculum for STEM.
- Increase Mental Health support for students:
 - Add 1.5 more school counselors. We currently have 3.5 at elementary schools.
 - Every elementary school will have school counselor
 - \$100k to purchase additional services to address significant mental health needs
- Add 7 half-time library clerks in K-8 to help students sign books out, collect books, and shelve books.
- Hire an “Innovation development coordinator” to assist with grant-writing and fostering a parent/community connection
- Add an ESL (English as a Second Language) coordinator

Mr. Mitchell said that his proposed budget meets some of these needs by reallocating existing resources from the high school. There was additional discussion about adding mental health support at the elementary schools. Mr. Mitchell said that all elementary principals mentioned this is a priority at recent meetings of the Achievement Subcommittee. Mrs. Teel asked about other issues that were identified by principals. Mr. Mitchell responded by saying that RTI was something that was mentioned by the principals, but he felt the district needed another year of RTI data before making any changes.

Mrs. Teel asked about the need for differentiated instruction. Mr. Mitchell said that the district understands the need and is working to respond to it.

Mr. Prignano reviewed projected revenues and expenses. A few months ago, he was projecting a \$3.5M budget gap for FY17, but now the actual gap was projected to be higher (\$4.1M).

Mr. Prignano reviewed the plan for Chromebooks. The Chromebooks currently in use by 12th grade students would be moved to the elementary schools (on carts). The district is proposing new Chromebooks be purchased for all rising 6th graders. Mr. Prignano said that town purchased Chromebooks this year for all high school students and that the town was financing this purchase via 3-year lease. There was some discussion about the implications of this for the town “maintenance of effort” obligations to the schools.

Mr. Prignano said that the superintendent’s budget asks all stakeholders to be involved: an additional \$1.6M from taxpayers; a proposed 0% pay increase for teachers; and one-time, fund balance revenue from the schools.

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Mrs. Beaulieu said that the district has needs around everything. She said that it is disturbing when Cumberland teachers visit other districts and come back and say “that school has so much more than we do.” She said it’s a “brutal reality slap.” She said that Cumberland is able to get good results while keeping the ship afloat, but that the district needs more for facilities, mental health, and attractive programming.

Mr. Mitchell said that Cumberland is the lowest funded school district in Rhode Island, and that this is an issue of equity. He said that the state average is about \$3000 more per student. He said there are districts in Rhode Island that offer foreign language, STEM coordinators, RTI, supplies, and more for athletics, for example.

Mr. DiModica noted that the superintendent’s “priority of needs” included more funding (\$90k) for athletics. Mr. Mitchell said that his budget request does not include this additional money for athletics, and it does not include funding for the girls hockey coop team. He said that the committee needed to make a decision about supporting girls hockey.

Mr. Dennen asked about the Assistant Principal position at Community School. He said that the position was needed, given the number of students who attend the school. Mr. Mitchell said the budget proposal did not include funding for that position.

Mr. Fiorillo asked about funding for substitute teachers. Mrs. Fogell responded by saying that there is a shortage of substitute teachers, and the problem was not related to funding. She said that the district offers a competitive rate for substitutes; the district offers a staggered rate to try to attract and retain substitute teachers.

Mrs. Beaulieu said that the budget would be posted to the district web site and she referred the budget to the Fiscal Management Subcommittee. She said there would be two budget workshops, followed by a vote by the school committee. The budget request was due to the town by the end of day on April 4.

Adjournment

Mrs. Teel and Mr. DiModica made a motion to adjourn; second by Mr Salvatore.

Motion passed 6–0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:09pm.

William J Dennen, Clerk
Cumberland School Committee