

Concord School District Board of Education
Board Work Session
February 1, 2017

Board members present: Clint Cogswell, *President*, Tom Croteau, Nathan Fennessy, Barb Higgins, Alana Kimball, Jennifer Patterson, Maureen Redmond-Scura, Jim Richards, Pam Wicks

Administration: *Superintendent* Terri L. Forsten, *Assistant Superintendent* Donna Palley, *Business Administrator* Jack Dunn, *Director of Human Resources* Larry Prince, *Director of Facilities and Planning* Matt Cashman

(NOTE: the referenced slides can be viewed on the district website, sau8.org, under SCHOOL BOARD/Budgets, 2017-2018 Proposed Budget.)

Board President Clint Cogswell called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m., noting that the proposed 2017-2018 school year budget would be presented. Superintendent Forsten stated that increasing New Hampshire Retirement costs, the upcoming steam-to-gas conversion bond, and increasing special education costs put pressure on this budget proposal. Business Administrator Jack Dunn noted that the major program categories for the budget include regular education, with options for full-day kindergarten; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; special education programs and services; technology upgrades; capital purchases; and debt service.

Mr. Dunn reviewed options for integrating both full-day kindergarten and a combination of full- and half-day kindergarten (see slides 9-10).

Superintendent Forsten continued to slide 11, noting the reduction in teaching staff resulting from declining enrollment and to potentially support the increased cost of full-day kindergarten. Pam Wicks questioned the increasing class sizes, and asked what the class size cutoff would be before another class would be added for a given grade. Superintendent Forsten explained that the class sizes presented are within current guidelines. She also confirmed that they are regularly monitored to ensure resources are moved to support students.

Mr. Dunn reviewed budget numbers for funds required to staff and furnish full-day vs. full- and half-day kindergarten programs (see slide 12). Superintendent Forsten noted that the budget numbers are reflective of the budget as a whole, and do not exclusively reflect the costs of the proposed kindergarten program.

Mr. Dunn clarified that the tax rate ranges for both kindergarten options reflect different items within both options (i.e. teacher reductions). Maureen Redmond-Scura noted that the numbers also reflect significant cuts in other budget items in order to meet the proposed numbers. Nathan Fennessy asked for clarification regarding the

differing budget impacts of both kindergarten options. Jennifer Patterson explained that the numbers are reflective both of adding the new kindergarten teachers *and* cutting five (5) other elementary teachers. Ms. Patterson commented that budget planning season is a very important time for Board members to “do their homework” to most effectively develop and finalize important budget line items and programs.

Mr. Dunn reviewed a list of major drivers of the budget numbers (slide 15), noting increases in several areas including salaries and benefits, natural gas, and special education services. Mr. Cogswell asked if any of the bond money could be used for summer maintenance projects. Mr. Dunn explained that because of the planning timeline, this money would not likely be available for any projects this summer, but may be available for summer 2018.

Mr. Dunn then reviewed the budget appropriation comparison between FY17 and FY18 (slide 19) and a breakdown of revenue sources for FY18 (slide 20).

Mr. Dunn explained that the budget document itself goes into more detail and that the reviewed tables serve as an overview. He noted that the vast majority of the New Hampshire Retirement Fund increase is because the rate increased this year. Mr. Cogswell asked if there is anything the Board could do to mitigate rising out-of-district special education costs. Superintendent Forsten replied that the administration is considering ways to impact special education costs through developing the special education leadership team.

Mr. Dunn presented the following:

- (Slides 21-24) – budget breakdown by function and object
- (Slides 29-40) – General review of budget items, many of which are not changing drastically from previous years
- (Slides 41-43) – General review of building and grounds, and construction. Matt Cashman noted a need to replace elementary school playground mulch this year
- (Slides 44-45) – General review of transportation budget items, including the purchase of new buses, replacement of one van, and reduction in salaries
- (Slides 46-47) – General review of benefits, noting increases in dental costs
- (Slide 48) – Review of transfers between budget funds
- (Slides 49-51) – Review of revenue streams, both increases and decreases
- (Slide 52) – Review of other and future considerations, including completion of the Rundlett Middle School study, capital improvements, commercial growth, the impact of the women’s prison opening on school enrollments, and utility bills.
- (Slide 54) – Review of unknown factors that may influence budgets, including city valuations, CHS and CRTC enrollments, and unreserved fund balances.

Mr. Dunn reviewed upcoming scheduled meetings; the next one will be on Wednesday, February 8, and continuing weekly for the remainder of February.

Tom Croteau asked Superintendent Forsten to clarify the proposed increase in Special Education administration, and Superintendent Forsten explained that the structure of the Special Education leadership model is being reviewed. She anticipates having a recommendation for the February 15 budget meeting.

Mr. Croteau asked Mr. Cashman to provide some projections regarding how currently-proposed cuts will affect planned facilities projects 5-10 years out at an upcoming Board meeting. Mr. Cashman will create this for a future meeting.

Ms. Wicks asked for clarification regarding how many students may be added with the opening of the women's prison. Superintendent Forsten said she would check to see if the City has made these projections yet.

Ms. Patterson motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Richardson.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Croteau, *Secretary*