

Concord School District
Board of Education
FY18 Budget Work Session Meeting

Date: February 20, 2017

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

Board members absent: Clint Cogswell

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

Jennifer Patterson called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Director of Facilities Matt Cashman presented information about the Facilities budget and reviewed plans for the \$130,000 proposed for summer maintenance work. This will include HVAC work at Beaver Meadow School (BMS), interior painting in all schools, bathroom partitions at Concord High School (CHS), Broken Ground School (BGS) bathroom upgrades and site repairs.

Mr. Cashman was asked about projects that he may have had to postpone for another year given budget limitations. He noted that there are roof systems and mechanicals that need attention but will need to wait until the future. Roofs are checked regularly and patched as needed. Mr. Cashman would like to be able to revise the mechanicals at BGS, BMS and CHS sometime in the future. This would provide dehumidified air and make these buildings consistent with the others. Mr. Cashman noted that there was a replacement cycle for middle school student bathrooms, with two left to be renovated. \$140,000-\$150,000 will be needed for these, so they are not in the plans for FY18. Mr. Cashman noted that, in addition to summer maintenance funds, the budget includes money for other routine maintenance and repairs during the school year, as well as contingency funds.

Business Administrator Jack Dunn presented the technology budget, providing a look-back at the history of the 1:1 device implementation. In FY13, students in grades 1-5 at the new elementary schools received 1:1 iPads. In FY14, grade 6 students received 1:1 iPads and students at BMS and BGS received iPads. In FY15, grade 7 students received iPads, and in FY16, grade 8 students received them. Grades 9 and 10 students received 1:1 Chromebooks in FY17.

Funds proposed in the FY18 budget, to be paid through the bond, would provide new Chromebooks in grades 4-8 and 11-12, with middle school iPads replacing outdated iPads in grades K-3. In addition, 119 staff laptops are in the budget, as well as funds to hire individuals to configure the new devices.

Board members questioned whether it would be appropriate to set up a technology fund within the budget to support the ongoing sustainability of District technology and avoid bonding in the future. Mr. Dunn noted that the bond used previously to purchase technology has just one more year of payments. The initial iPads for the new schools were purchased through the building bond. Mr. Dunn recalled that several years ago he spoke to the Board about ongoing costs for technology and predicted that approximately \$500,000 would be needed annually. He noted that, in addition to devices, the District's servers, which cost about \$40,000, will need to be replaced in the near future.

Superintendent Forsten noted that the administration is working on a question-and-answer document to provide detailed information in response to questions that have come up in the work sessions and from individual members. At the next work session, these questions and answers will be discussed, and there will also be time for a conversation about full-day kindergarten options.

Board members noted that it will be helpful to have clear information about the impact of costs on the tax rate. Maureen Redmond-Scura also asked Superintendent Forsten to consult with the District's attorney to see if the use of a lottery for kindergarten, as is described in the Plan B option, would be legal.

Board members briefly discussed the option to include in the budget kindergarten tuition revenue from families. This was initially discussed by the Early Childhood Committee, but there was little interest, as anecdotal information reviewed at that time suggested that there was a variety of negative aspects connected to this. There is uncertainty about whether funds for kindergarten may be coming from the State. Several members felt that tuition might still be something to consider going forward; other members felt that tuition payment would not be appropriate.

Mr. Dunn explained that the proposed budget uses .38% as the anticipated growth in real estate valuation in Concord. This rate is based on a prediction of 'real growth' and not market value. Real growth reflects the value of additional property that is being added to the base of properties in Concord, such as new construction or additions to existing homes. The value of individual property already counted by the City may go up or down in market value, so a tax rate increase can have a different effect on homeowners in different neighborhoods. The question-and-answer document will include more detailed information about the tax situation.

Ms. Redmond-Scura raised concerns about class size given the possible elimination of several upper elementary teachers. She noted that class size within the proposal would still fall within the Board's guidelines, but said she appreciates the difficulty teachers have in differentiating instruction for a wide range of student needs in large classrooms. She suggested that the Board consider putting additional money into the contingency fund so that another teacher could be added if needed. Jim Richards also suggested that reducing teachers at the middle and high schools should be considered along with elementary schools. Superintendent Forsten indicated that further

discussion of teachers for the middle and high schools would be discussed at the March 15 work session, when enrollment would be considered. She also noted that middle and high school teacher cuts are already included in the budget.

Mr. Cashman noted that the budget includes a request for a new plow truck. One of the plow trucks is currently not roadworthy, and may need to be replaced this spring. If that is the case, then this item could be removed from the proposed FY18 budget.

Mr. Dunn indicated that the District has a special education trust fund that could be used to pay for all or some of the out-of-district cost overage. He also explained that the school administrators have been informed that they will no longer be able to use declining balance amounts for this year without working directly with him. He is hoping that there may be some cost reductions this year with items budgeted but found not to be needed.

The Board voted 8-0 to adjourn (motioned by Mr. Croteau, seconded by Ms. Redmond-Scura).

The meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Patterson, Vice-President
Donna Palley, *Recorder*