

Concord School District
Board of Education
Public Hearing
March 22, 2017

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

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

Board President Clint Cogswell called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m., noting that it was the second public hearing to discuss the FY17-18 budget. He established several ground rules, including limiting speaker time length to ensure participants have adequate time to speak, and refraining from applause in between speakers.

Superintendent Forsten briefly reviewed the agenda:

- Budget 2017–2018 Goals
- New program considerations (aka FDK)
- Budget reductions
- Expenditures
- Revenues
- Budget summary
- Other considerations – unknowns
- Questions – public comment

Superintendent Forsten reviewed the five budget goals:

1. Regular education
 - a. Maintain class sizes within the guidelines of School Board Policy #641
 - b. Respond in a responsible manner to the changes in student enrollment
 - c. Include options for developing expanded kindergarten programs
2. Curriculum instruction and assessment
 - a. Continue science and STEM program development with Next Generation Science Standards
 - b. Further develop implementation of college- and career-aligned studies
3. Special education programs and services
 - a. Develop special education leadership to support staff supervision and program development

- b. Improve programming to support the needs of students with serious social, emotional and behavioral challenges and autism
- 4. Capital purchases
 - a. Use stable, sustainable methods for major purchases, capital improvements and for replacement plans within the budget constraints
- 5. Debt service
 - a. Maintain 5% of the operating budget for debt service
 - b. Attain a bond to complete the conversion from steam to natural gas, CRTC childcare building, and purchase of school buses and technology

She also noted the new program consideration of full-day kindergarten.

Business Administrator Jack Dunn reviewed the budget reductions, noting the particular impact of the Concord Steam conversion and the New Hampshire Retirement System (NHRS) cost increase. He also noted increasing special education costs. Mr. Dunn reviewed revenue sources for the District, which include local, state and federal funds.

FY18 BUDGET: \$23,426,505 (29%)

Local - \$3,966,403	(\$218,907)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition, Transportation, Building Rental, Athletics, PILOT 	
State - \$16,155,653	+365,399
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catastrophic Aid, Adequacy, Building Aid (grandfathered), Vocational Aid 	
Federal - \$1,929,449	(\$395,377)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medicaid, E-Rate, Bond Interest Rebates (<i>reduced due to sequestration</i>) 	
Transfers - \$90,000	(\$228,901)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Grants (<i>Indirect</i>) and Expendable Trust Funds 	
Unreserved Fund Balance - \$1,325,000	(\$1,070,975)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savings from Prior Year Budget 	

Change – (\$1,548,761) or (6.61%)

Mr. Dunn reviewed other consideration and unknown factors that affect budget planning, including union negotiations, the Rundlett Middle School study and subsequent follow-up, and city, state and federal considerations.

Board

- Negotiations - 2017-2018: 5 Collective Bargaining Groups (*Teachers, Instructional Assistants, Maintenance, Transportation and Food Service*)
- Rundlett Middle School Study – to be completed July 2017, then what?
- 2018-2019 Budget - get back to where we are now
- Catastrophic Aid (*special education*)

- Adequacy - *Current Year: \$3,636.08 for full-time students, and \$1,818.04 (1/2 day or full day) for Kindergarteners*
- Capital Improvements (*April 2017 – Review Capital Improvement Plan, Capital Facilities Committee*)
- Declining Enrollment (*predicted to be somewhat steady – 1% annually*) – *Impact on Revenue (\$3,636 per student as of current year)*

City

- Budget (*starting soon*)
- Commercial and Residential Real Growth (*mall valued @ over \$80 million in 2007, now \$18million*)
- Utility Valuation – HB 324

State

- Bi-Annual Budget
- Legislation - State pension cost contributions (HB 413) (HB 415), FDK funding (SB191, HB 155), emergency aid, building aid moratorium, Charter School

Federal

- Medicaid Funding
- Title I Funding
- After School Program Funding
- Charter and Private School Funding

Mr. Cogswell then opened the floor for public comment.

Don Jewell spoke against cutting the 7th grade World Language exploratory program. His sons benefited from the exposure to languages in the 7th grade: one son took Latin in the 8th grade and continued it for a total of five years of Latin study, which was a considerable benefit to him; another son also took Latin in 8th grade; and another took German in his Junior year, a result of the exposure in the 7th grade program. He thinks world languages are important at this point in time. He also wanted to thank the Board for its considerable deliberations on full-day kindergarten. He thinks this budget issue has been well represented at the Board level, and the 5-3 vote showed a healthy debate. He would encourage the Board to maintain the budget as it is.

Maureen Adams spoke in favor of the 7th grade World Language program. She has three children, two in 7th grade and an 11th grader. Her children have experienced living in another country. She advocates beginning World Language at an earlier age. She was concerned that a visiting friend from Germany was not allowed to attend school at Rundlett with her children during the period of the visit. Her children had been able to visit at a German school when they were there. She noted that it is important for our children to learn about different cultures. She believes language study has a positive impact on future job opportunities and opens up the world to children.

Karen Paddleford spoke in favor of adding full-day kindergarten to the budget. She is a resident, a taxpayer and the parent of two young children. She was a member of the

District's Early Childhood Education Steering Committee. She has been impressed by the work of her child's current half-day kindergarten teacher and would like to see full-day kindergarten offered to provide more time for play-based learning. She indicated that this is an issue of equity, that all children should have a chance to have this experience, which would reduce disparities.

Nancy Diamond is a pediatric health care professional. She noted the challenges of a half-day kindergarten, as transitions are very difficult for young children. She advocated for a full-day kindergarten program as a healthier choice for kindergarten students.

Tom Ficarra supported the 7th grade World Language program. He said his job in Manchester brings him into contact with many refugees in that city. He noted that they speak one or more languages beyond English, and are therefore well situated in our economy, as having language skills is important in the world economy. His children had valuable experiences with the 7th grade World Language program in Concord.

Pam Ean is a Concord resident and taxpayer. She reminded the Board that the money in the budget comes from taxpayers. In Concord, the taxes are going up, and when she retires, she worries that she will not be able to afford to stay in Concord. She noted that when two parents are forced to work, they are not there for their children. Taxes shouldn't be so high that both parents are forced to work in order to pay them. She asked the Board to please be careful about raising the taxes too much – young people as well as older residents will not be able to remain in the city if taxes are too high.

Ham Munnell is a Concord resident, parent of two children in the District, and a District teacher. He advocated keeping two great young talented teachers in the District. He noted that they are both Concord graduates and will be casualties of the budget cuts. He said that both Shawn Moseley and Dan Breen are teachers and coaches who go above and beyond with students, and hoped that a way can be found to keep these two young men in the District.

Patrick Lang is the parent of a Concord High School (CHS) graduate. He assumed one of the goals of a Concord education is to help students appreciate cultural diversity and, because of the World Language teachers, his daughter has a passion for language, took four years of German in high school and studied German in college. She benefited from the early start in 7th grade. He asked the Board to reconsider the cut.

George Tarwo is a senior at CHS and a captain of the wrestling team. He asked the Board to keep Mr. Moseley and Mr. Breen as coaches and teachers, noting that they have helped both him and his younger brother academically.

Tristan Sharich is a freshman at CHS and came before the Board to support Mr. Moseley and Mr. Breen. He indicated that these individuals are quality people and deserve to have their jobs. He noted that older teachers cost more, and suggested that the Board cut an older teacher who might not try as hard as these two teachers.

David Shore is a CHS graduate who spoke on behalf of the 7th grade language program. He noted that he does not remember much about middle school, about 10 years ago for

him, but remembers very specific things he was taught during the World Language exploratory program, including his Latin name. He noted that his family moved to Concord from Epsom because they were looking for better educational opportunities, including a wonderful World Language program. Mr. Shore went on to take five years of Latin at CHS, and complimented his teachers on the great job they did.

Marie Lang is a CHS graduate who studied German for five years in high school. She spoke in favor of keeping the 7th grade World Language program, saying she remembered many things she learned while being exposed to all four languages. Ms. Lang then took four more years of German in college, and is now an IT attorney in Concord, where she is able to work with clients in German because of her language proficiency. She feels that language study makes students more competitive in the work world and would hate for them to lose this advantage.

Jennifer Walton is the parent of two students, one at Broken Ground School (BGS) and one at RMS. She spoke in favor of full-day kindergarten, noting that she would pay additional taxes to support it. She thinks highly of the principal and staff at BGS, and is confident they could rise to the challenge of higher class sizes if this came about, but asked the Board not to raise class size higher than 25, especially at the start of the year. She would prefer staffing levels to stay where they are now. She also supported the World Language program in 7th grade. She said her son has spoken highly of Mr. Moseley as a teacher.

Joanne Wagner is the parent of several student wrestlers at CHS, who have also had some learning challenges. Mr. Breen and Mr. Moseley were pivotal in building confidence in her sons to help them build strength as students, and also gave a lot of time with students beyond the school day.

Peter Rosen is an 18-year resident of Concord. Two of his sons went to Rundlett Middle School (RMS) and one was especially impressed with the World Language program there. He participated in the CHS GAPP study abroad in Germany, and also participated in a semester abroad. Mr. Rosen noted that parents have choices of public or private schools, and said he would not want to see continued cuts in quality programs that will result in parents choosing private school over public school. He supported keeping the exploratory language program in the 7th grade.

Curtis Barry has had three children at CHS. When deciding where to live, his family decided on Concord because of the robust menu of options and opportunities, including the language and music programs. He suggested that the 7th grade World Language exploratory program offers value to student to help them make an informed decision about World Language study. He noted that this is a cut that does not seem to be driven by enrollment, and it is an offering that is presented to every single student. He questioned why this cut is being considered.

Daniel Reinemann is a CHS graduate who has just returned from a year teaching English in China. He offered strong support for the exploratory language program at RMS, saying that he found it to be an amazing opportunity to explore all four language

options, which helped to inform students' choice. He studied five years of German at CHS, and participated in the GAPP program. He went on to study Chinese at college. He noted that cultural exposure is important and opens up new aspects of the world to students. In other countries, children start studying another language at the 3rd grade level. He asked that the Board not cut the exploratory program, noting that language study provides an edge in the global economy.

Tom McCloud has lived in Concord for a long time, and noted that Concord has excellent schools. He complimented the Board members for giving their time. He asked the Board to keep the budget as it is proposed, without full-day kindergarten. He asked the Board to focus on solving the heating program and building a brand new middle school. He does not trust that the government, either at the state or federal level, will give the District funds to help out. He would love to say go ahead and do full-day kindergarten, but right now, the fiscal climate is just not conducive to it.

Zack Sheehan graduated from CHS in 2010, and has recently moved back to the state. He has no children and so would not personally benefit from full-day kindergarten, but he is potentially buying a house, and would gladly pay more to support such a program. He noted that early childhood education is important and that, while he is not directly benefiting from it, he supports full-day kindergarten.

Alison Holt is the mother of two young children. She believes that full-day kindergarten will add value to the District, which is important to attract young families to the city. She believes that full-day kindergarten is a good investment, with every dollar put into early childhood education coming back as a benefit.

Kim Saffian graduated from CHS and has had four children go through the system, with one child still at CHS. She is not in favor of the Board cutting the 7th grade exploratory language program. If anything, she would want this to start earlier, in the elementary schools. She is in favor of full-day kindergarten for consistency in the early years of development. She also noted that the coach is amazing, and that the District cannot afford to lose teachers like him. She noted that she is a taxpayer, and she would be happy to have taxes raised, as kids are most important.

Emma Sisti is a taxpayer who was born and raised in Concord, and attended Concord schools. She is the parent of three boys under the age of 6, including a first grader who attended full-day private kindergarten. She said she worried about her son's transitions during the day, and felt he needed a full-day program to set him up for success. She noted that in her first teacher conference with her child's first grade teacher, the teacher said that children who came from private kindergartens are more focused and better able to benefit from a full day of first grade. She would want young families to move to Concord, and not end up choosing neighboring communities like Bow, Hopkinton and the Merrimack Valley District because they offer full-day kindergarten.

Brian Hopkins lives in Ward 10 and has a 2-year old child. He asked the Board to include full-day kindergarten for his child and others who might be attracted to Concord. Other communities are moving to full-day programs, and he asked the Board

not to fall behind. He noted that the Board should not let this be the reason people move to other communities with full-day kindergarten.

David Abrams noted that he also spoke at the budget hearing on Monday. He is not in favor of cuts to teachers or to the World Language program. He is a parent of children in kindergarten and second grade and is in favor of full-day kindergarten. He noted that there are kids in the community who have nothing, no support at home, and if you send them to a public kindergarten for just 2.5 hours, they return home to nothing. He also noted that the math standards assume a full-day curriculum and this would cause a problem in subsequent grades. He understands that higher taxes put a strain on older taxpayers, but he noted that the students invested in now will provide a greater economic benefit than older taxpayers who will not be around in the future. He also urged people to go to the state and demand more revenue sources.

Jonah Felstead is the parent of several children, including an upcoming kindergartener. He would like to have the kindergarten program remain as half-time. He does not think the research studies show long-term benefit for full-day kindergarten. He and his wife decided to move to Concord because the tax rate was reasonable. He would be concerned if the tax rate went up.

Sarah Hayes is a CHS graduate and a German teacher at the school. She also participated in the 7th grade exploratory language program and thinks it would be a mistake to cut it from the budget. She noted that there seems to be a connection between World Language study and career pathways, describing a number of peers from high school who have gone on to have careers that were closely connected to World Language study. She also noted that cultural study and empathy is important at this time. Learning new languages helps student learn about other cultures and those who are different.

Chuck McGee is a resident of Ward 10 with five younger children. He thanked the Board members for their hard work on the budget, and noted that they put needs ahead of wants in the budget. In these times, with the numbers that the Board and taxpayers are facing, he believes the Board has done an excellent job developing the budget and he asked them to stick to the budget that has been proposed. The City and county have needs as well, so he asked the Board to hold the line for now, potentially considering other items in future years.

John Tobin lives in Concord and his children went through the Concord Schools. He noted that the Board always has taken the long view in its decisions. He hoped that the Board would support full-day kindergarten. He noted that the taxpayer will pay about \$80 per year for kindergarten and he is happy to pay this increase. He asked the Board to step away from the intergenerational conflict, noting that the intergenerational social compact is important. His children have benefited from the educational program in Concord and said he felt his obligation was to maintain the strength of the system and respond to new needs in the future.

Rick Johnson asked whether cuts were proposed relative to the Capitol Center for the Arts, which he described as a valuable program. Superintendent Forsten indicated that there are no proposed cuts to this program in this budget.

Madeleine Mineau is the mother of two young children and was a member of the Early Childhood Education Steering Committee. She spoke in favor of full-day kindergarten, noting that her children will be sent to a full-day program no matter what, but she wants all people to have this chance, and sees it as a matter of equity. She believes that there will always be funding concerns each year, and would like to see this budgeted now.

Byron Champlin is a resident of Ward 4 who noted that he understands the difficulty of balancing the needs of children with concerns about taxes, but is in favor of full-day kindergarten. He noted that the defensive stance is to be frugal and cull what is needed and not needed. The offensive stance is to not avoid programs that are valuable and economically important. In our city, full-day kindergarten is important for employers and employees as they consider coming to Concord. He believes that Concord needs to show a strong school system that will support the aspirations of young workers as they look at the lives they want their children to lead.

Nancy Emery is a retired CHS Latin teacher who designed the World Language exploratory program in the 1990s. She described the program, noting that at each of the four rotations, students have an introduction to a language that is lively and engaging, so when they have a chance to choose, they make an informed choice. These early skills are directly related to other important skills in language learning. Language also conveys a culture, and now with nationalism on the rise, she believes that this gives students a chance to make connections with others around the world.

Eaton Tarbell spoke against cutting Mr. Breen's and Mr. Moseley's positions. He said he knows them from the perspective of their wrestling coaching and their teaching, and describes them as great assets to the District

Leeza Richter is a student at CHS who spoke against cuts in the World Language program at the RMS. She said she has had excellent language teachers at CHS.

Kelly Lainey is the parent of four children, including a senior and a sixth grader. She expressed support for Mr. Moseley, who has been an important teacher to her son. Her daughter studied three languages at CHS and studied abroad. This came from her experience at 7th grade, where she was introduced to languages and decided she wanted to study them all. Her son has a double major in Chinese and German, and this has led to employment opportunities for him.

Brooke Mulkerron has three children in Concord Schools, at Mill Brook (MBS) and BGS. She spoke against cutting teachers at the higher elementary levels. She is a substitute teacher at BGS and MBS and does not want to overload teachers with more students.

Bob Brown is a taxpayer and 8th grade US History and Civics teacher at RMS. He shared informal, unscientific information from two of his 8th grade classes, where several students brought the proposed World Language cut up to him. He was surprised that

students discussed this, as they do not usually bring this kind of thing up, and noted that this speaks to the power of that course.

Connie Colton is the parent of four children who went through Concord schools. Each took the 7th grade exploratory, and each continued their language studies at 8th grade and into high school. She worries that if students do not have the exploratory course in 7th grade, they may not choose a language course for the 8th grade, resulting in many fewer students taking World Language courses.

Michael Shea spoke against cutting the 7th grade World Language program. He said his experience in the 7th grade program made him want to take German. The enthusiasm of the teacher was what encouraged him to go forward with German language study.

Nick Lajoie is a CHS graduate and alum of the German program, noting that it had a big impact on his life. He is now studying German in college, and commented that if he had not taken the 7th grade exploratory program, he would not have studied a language. Although he did not take a language class in 8th grade, he did study German at CHS.

Erin Waters is an advocate of the World Language program: she had a learning disability, and English classes were hard for her. She would not have taken a language if she had not had the 7th grade exploratory program. She has developed greater confidence and traveled the world as a result of the program. It changed her life.

Kristyn Van Ostern, who lives in Ward 4, has a 3-year-old and a student at Christa McAuliffe School (CMS). She said she has spoken to the Board on this topic before. She said she has calculated that about \$80 per year in taxes would pay for full-day kindergarten and suggested that, for some taxpayers, this would reduce the costs they are currently paying in childcare, or allow them to work more hours, or add to their business. The return might come in the way of reduced costs from special education, remediation, or mid-day transportation. She said that the long-term return for investing in early childhood is a decrease in delinquency and better adult earning potential.

Christine Giacalone is a CHS Spanish teacher and the parent of several students in Concord schools. She described her experience in Concord as phenomenal. She spoke about what she is teaching her 7th graders in the World Language program, and noted that she has the opportunity to develop a relationship with all 7th grade students. She would like to see the World Language program start earlier. She also supports full-day kindergarten.

Sean McGee is a CHS student and wrestler. He noted that the coaches regularly work with students after school hours and weekends and are very dedicated. He is not in favor of cutting Mr. Breen or Mr. Moseley.

Michaela Hayes is a CHS student who studies language. She asked that World Language courses not be cut.

Lindsey Hanson is a Ward 4 homeowner who has no children. She supports full-day kindergarten. She quoted a sheriff who, commenting on crime prevention, said that full-day kindergarten is one key to ensuring the safety and security of our students.

Leah (last name unclear) is a student at CHS, enrolled in the CRTC's Teacher Preparation program. She also works for the 21C afterschool program. She noted that she is in favor of full-day kindergarten, which would not only benefit students, but also the Teacher Preparation program by offering the opportunity for internships in kindergarten for high school students. She also noted that the Board should not cut teachers without speaking first to students about which teachers should be cut first.

Lew Feldstein is a Concord resident who has worked with Robert Putnam, the author of the book *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*. He noted that the book describes what makes a difference for children, and full-day kindergarten makes a difference. He noted that it is important to get kids at an early age while the brain is changing quickly. He recognized the tough budget choices being considered, but believes that full-day kindergarten is important.

Laura Ernst is a resident of Concord and a German teacher at RMS and CHS. She is concerned about the proposal that would cut the 7th grade World Language program at RMS, and would like to have this reconsidered. She feels the backlash from parents and students is important to hear. She noted that strong middle school programs make strong high school programs, and noted that it is important to start language programs earlier rather than later.

Erin Sharkey is a Concord resident, taxpayer and parent of children both in and now out of District schools, who is in favor of full-day kindergarten. She gave up her full-time employment so she could accommodate the kindergarten part-time hours. Only one parent is working in her family, as they cannot afford the cost of daycare. She is willing to pay higher taxes and believes that the part-time day is disruptive for children.

Katie McDonough is a Latin teacher at RMS and CHS. She spoke to the Board in favor of not cutting the 7th grade World Language program. She asked her students today about the 7th grade World Language program, and reported that students noted discovering a language they would not have taken otherwise, that they enjoyed the program and learned from it.

Mark Feigl is a wrestling coach, attorney and taxpayer. He spoke to the Board in favor of not cutting Mr. Moseley and Mr. Breen. He noted that they are both fantastic coaches, putting in extra time to support the students.

Alison Rhodes is a Concord parent with a daughter now at CHS, who submitted written testimony in favor of keeping the 7th grade World Language program, noting that the program takes an active role in producing students who inquire creatively about their world and take an interest in other cultures by showing them four different languages and cultures.

Ron Rayner is a Concord taxpayer who submitted written testimony against including full-day kindergarten in this year's budget. He wrote that while he does not dispute its benefits as outlined by others; with ever-increasing taxes, the downshifting of employee retirement and pension contributions, ever-increasing health insurance premiums and the unexpected dissolution of and closure of Concord Steam, this is not the year to

implement full-day kindergarten. Further, he noted that the State legislature will be cutting education funding, including the Governor's full-day kindergarten proposal. Lastly, he noted that it is unknown how much federal funding for public education will be cut. He wrote that he supports the Board's recommendation of not funding full-day kindergarten this year.

Mr. Cogswell asked for a show of hands around the support of two issues discussed at the public hearing: full-day kindergarten and the 7th grade World Language exploratory program. Many individuals in the room indicated their support for these programs, although a count was not taken.

The Public Hearing was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.