

Concord School District Board of Education
Public Hearing #1 – Broken Ground School
March 7, 2018

Board members present: Jennifer Patterson, *President*, Clint Cogswell, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Liza Poinier, Maureen Redmond-Scura, Jim Richards, Pam Wicks

Board member absent: Nathan Fennessy

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

Board President Jennifer Patterson called the public hearing to order at 5:33 p.m., introducing the first of two Public Hearings scheduled to review and receive public comment on the proposed FY19 budget. Superintendent Terri Forsten reviewed the agenda items:

- Budget 2018–2019 goals
- Full-day kindergarten (FDK) programs
- Budget reductions
- Expenditures
- Revenues
- Budget summary
- Other considerations – unknowns
- Upcoming work sessions
- Questions – public comment

Superintendent Forsten reviewed the goals of the budget:

- Regular education
 - Maintain class sizes within the guidelines of School Board Policy #641
 - Respond in a responsible manner to changes in student enrollment
 - Include FDK
- Curriculum, instruction, & assessment
 - Continue STEM development
 - Continue software application – Dream Box and Lexia
 - Development for FDK

- Student Services
 - Develop special education leadership to support staff supervision and program development
 - Improve support to students with serious social, emotional and behavioral challenges and autism
 - Pick up some components of SAMHSA grant as it sunsets
- Technology
 - Maintain 1:1 devices for all students* (with the exception of kindergarten, which is approximately 3 students per iPad)
 - Continue to replace teacher laptops
 - Replace elementary iPads
- Debt service
 - Maintain 5% of the operating budget for debt service

Superintendent Forsten reviewed the process by which FDK would be implemented by the District:

- Fall 2015: the Board formed a Steering Committee to research effective early childhood education and FDK programs
- Spring 2016: the Early Childhood Education Steering Committee offered a report of their findings, [Early Childhood Education Steering Committee Findings 2016](#)
- Fall 2016: the Board considered five options for developing early childhood education programs, [Options for Developing Early Childhood Programs 2016](#)
- Spring 2017: the New Hampshire Legislature voted to increase state adequacy by \$1100 per student enrolled in FDK programs, to begin in the fall of 2018
- Summer 2017: District kindergarten teachers met to develop ideas for FDK curriculum and instruction
- The Board requested that the FY19 Budget include FDK program costs

Superintendent Forsten reviewed the costs associated with FDK, including itinerant staff and furniture, supplies and equipment, explaining that these staff members will travel among the four schools with FDK programs. With a low-end estimate of \$912,895 and a high-end estimate of \$1,229,848, the FY19 proposed budget for FDK is \$1,118,312.29. Superintendent Forsten noted that as staff has not yet been hired, this number is still just a projection. She emphasized the importance of kindergarten/grade 1 registration, as the administration will use this information to review how many kindergarten classrooms and staff members will be needed. She added that schools have been asked to open registration earlier than usual this year to assist with this planning.

Business Administrator Jack Dunn reviewed expenditures and revenues for FY18 and FY19, emphasizing the particular challenges of trying to incorporate FDK into the budget last year

during the heating conversion away from Concord Steam and amidst dramatically increasing NH Retirement System costs. He reviewed revenue, including the transfer of Community Education to the City of Concord, and a reduction in the unreserved fund balance. He noted that this year's revenue deficit was only \$11,000, compared to last year's \$1.1 million, which underscored the significance of last year's budget challenges.

Superintendent Forsten reviewed staff changes, including several elementary teacher and administrative staff reductions, additional kindergarten staff, and the increase of a .5 teacher position in the Superintendent's contingency line to cover an additional teaching position should the need arise due to class sizes.

Mr. Dunn reviewed FY19 major funds, including the general fund, food service and grant funding, explaining that the general fund is what affects the local tax rate, and showing an overall increase of 2.08% over last year's budget. The general fund breakdown is as follows:

Salaries and benefits:	\$63,225,618
• Increase due to salary steps, increases and FDK	+1,165,774
• Increase in benefits	+422,608
• Increase in life/disability	+52,500
• Increase in dental	+\$12,558
• Decrease in unemployment	(10,000)
Contracted services, maintenance supplies, equipment:	\$11,064,954
• Increase in out-of-district tuition	(249,293)
• Decrease computer lease	(96,158)
• Decrease due to natural gas	(37,300)
• Increase in software	+37,890
• Increase in summer projects	+125,000
Debt service:	\$5,875,669
• Decrease in debt service	(109,951)
Dues, tees and transfers:	\$1,625,709
• Transfer \$805,322 into the Facilities Stabilization Fund	

Superintendent Forsten reviewed Special Education costs, noting that 763 students aged 3-21 are in the District's special education program, which has represented approximately 15% of overall student enrollment for several years. Seventy-eight students receive services out of district, which includes community preschools, special education placements (K-12), charter schools and Second Start. She noted an increase in in-district special education costs in the amount of \$141,942, which reflects a decrease in out-of-district tuition and an increase in the number of educational assistants. She explained an increase of \$1,022,099 for behavior-autism contracted services, which represents an increase in the numbers of significantly behaviorally challenged students needing Behavior Specialist support, and increased support for students returning from out-of-district placements.

Mr. Dunn reviewed New Hampshire Retirement System costs, noting that contributions have increased over several years and that this trend would likely continue. New rates are set for two years, so the next rate setting in October 2019 would affect the FY20 budget.

Employer rates:

- Teacher rate: **17.36%**
 - Increased from 15.67% to 17.36% in FY18
- Non-Teacher rate: **11.38%**
 - Increased from 11.08% to 11.38% in FY18

Budget impact:

- No rate increase for FY19

Employee rates:

- Increased from 5% to 7% in 2012

Mr. Dunn reviewed debt service, noting a decrease in interest on debt. He explained that, since 2005, the Board has tried to maintain a level capital debt service of 5% to avoid spikes in the tax rate. He reviewed summaries of the budget by function and object, and revenue sources, which include local and state taxes, state and federal funds, transfers, and unreserved fund balance. He provided a breakdown of local and state taxes, explaining that this would amount to a 1.99% increase for FY18, with an estimated tax impact of \$78 on a \$250,000 home. He noted that this does not include county or city taxes, which the District does not control.

Mr. Dunn reviewed other considerations and unknown factors for next year's budget planning, which include:

Board

- Negotiations 2017-2018: five collective bargaining groups (*Teachers, Educational Assistants, Maintenance – Transportation Association, * Admin Assistants and Food Service*)
 - Settled *Maintenance – Transportation Association (MTA)* on February 12, 2018
- Enrollment – demographic study
- Concord High School – road construction on streets (Warren, North Fruit, Woodman, Westbourne)
- Catastrophic Aid (*special education*)
- Adequacy – *current year: \$3,636.08 for full-time students, and \$2,918.04 for full-day kindergarteners*
- Capital improvements (*Rundlett Middle School and other facility improvements*)
- Declining enrollment (*this is predicted to be somewhat steady – 1% annually*) – *impact on revenue (\$3,636 per student as of current year)*
- Appropriation for safety and security grant

City

- Budget
- Commercial and residential real growth

State

- Legislation – vouchers related to SB 193, and others

Federal

- Medicaid funding
- Title I funding

- After school program funding
- Charter and private school funding

The meeting was then opened for public comment.

Aimee Valeras – Parent of a student at CMS. She stated she was advocating for not increasing the student-to-teacher ratio, noting that class size has a demonstrated impact on academic achievement and student learning. She cited the STAR study conducted in the late 1980s, which studied over 80 schools and 7,000 students over a large spectrum of socioeconomic levels. Ms. Valeras stated that this study demonstrated a significant increase in academic achievement in the smaller class sizes, with particular benefit to males and disadvantaged students. She added that since the study, 24 states have mandated smaller class sizes. She added that great learning occurs in diverse school districts such as Concord. Her daughter Ayanna then spoke, stating that she is a student in the largest class at CMS and that it felt like there was not enough time to learn and not enough teacher time to go around.

Jen Walton – Parent of students at RMS and BGS, also on the PTA at BGS. She explained that her first experience with the District was with the family center at Dame School, a beneficial experience for her family. She said she was grateful that the District is taking on programs formerly covered by the expiring SAMHSA grant. She echoed the previous speaker's comments about the importance of class size and suggested that perhaps the current class size guidelines are outdated and inappropriate for a school community as diverse as Concord's. She emphasized research showing the benefit of smaller class sizes, particularly with such a high population of ELL and special needs students, noting that these groups as well as normal and high-achieving students can get the attention they need when class sizes are large.

Matthew Masur – Parent of student at BGS. He echoed previous comments on class size, stating that his son will be entering grade 5 at BGS and that his son feels bigger classes will be louder, more chaotic, and harder to get time with his teacher. He stated that the cost of not cutting teachers is far less than the long-term costs and implications of larger class sizes.

Erin Harmon – Parent of student at MBS and an upcoming FDK student. She is an educator in another school district and sees the benefit of smaller class sizes, both for students and teachers. She feels the curriculum demands on teachers are already challenging, so adding more students to classes will increase that burden and is a disservice to both students and teachers. She feels Board members should visit these larger classrooms and observe how teachers handle already-large classes and see what a typical day is like.

Board members thanked the public for their attendance and thoughtful comments.

The Board voted unanimously to adjourn (motioned by Mr. Crush, seconded by Mr. Croteau).

The meeting adjourned at 6:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Redmond-Scura, *Secretary*