

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Approved minutes of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School Committee's Special Meeting on the FY 2020 Budget held Wednesday, February 6, 2019, Charlton Middle School, 2 Oxford Road, Charlton, MA 01507, 7 p.m.

In attendance were members of the School Committee:

Pauline J. Aucoin, Chair
Cathleen Carmignani
Catherine M. Kabala
Elaine M. Rabbitt
Stephanie A. Reed
Jamie L. Terry
Mary N. Antocci, Vice Chair, was absent

Also in attendance were Kristine E. Nash, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent of Schools, Richard J. Mathieu, Director of Finance and Operations; Lorinda C. Allen, Karen A. Ares, William F. Chaplin, Jennifer A. Desto, Lori A. Pacheco, Dean W. Packard, Kathleen E. Pastore, Diane D. Seibold, Christopher E. Starczewski; Kevin Foley, Richard Earle, audio-visual coordinator, Sandra Sullivan, recording secretary.

I. Call to Order

The chair called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. New Business

FY 2020 Budget:

Dr. Nash offered the perspective on the FY 2020 budget. In her memo to the committee, Dr. Nash said budget work does not conclude until the end of the school year. Over the next month the committee will deliberate and discuss the information presented by district administrators, leading to the vote on a preliminary budget at the Feb. 27 school committee meeting.

As perspective Dr. Nash noted when you build a budget you need to make some assumptions as there are unknowns.

Last year with the approval of the Proposition 2½ override, the district received a \$3 million revenue stream that was previously not available. This amount was more than the district typically got from the towns. This year, the district is looking at \$1 million in new money. Employee salaries make up 75-80% of the budget. To stay on par with 2018-19 delivery of services, the district would use all of the \$1 million to pay for salaries.

Dr. Nash presented the budget assumptions: employee salaries are inserted as place holders as the actual costs will be determined in negotiations with Dudley-Charlton Teachers Association; salary for the new superintendent; monies for potential reorganization as proposed by Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools; mitigate the reliance on School Choice, to not use the funds for positions. The STEAM director's salary is presently funded by School Choice monies. The FY 20 budget proposed this salary be moved to the general ledger side. Dr. Nash and Mr. Mathieu have budgeted School Choice revenue at \$890,000 with the assumption that we will take in sufficient students to fund the budget. The budget also includes an estimate of \$800,000 for circuit breaker, and potential unemployment due to reallocation of personnel.

Dr. Nash said the unknowns can have a positive effect, as we do not know the actual cost of unemployment. Others include the actual salary increases due to negotiations; additional increases in special education tuitions. There is no place holder for out of district tuitions.

Potential savings may be found in the area of employee benefits. The district's Insurance Advisory Committee is studying the possibility of entering a joint purchase agreement with several neighboring communities. This would save the district \$200,000.

Dr. Nash said as the committee deliberates the budget, members may decide they do not want to make some of these assumptions and they can be removed from consideration. Dr. Nash said it is the desire to add 10 new positions. Two of the positions are proposed to remedy compliance issues at a cost of \$100,000, and will be funded.

Dr. Nash said the district must decrease its reliance on E and D funds, which typically runs from \$1-1.2 million per year.

Director of Special Education: Lorinda C. Allen

Mrs. Allen presented an overview of special education students in district, broken down by grade. This population includes students in sub-separate, inclusion, and appointment based services.

Mrs. Allen said the special education tuition account will see an increase of \$247,000 increase after offsets by grants.

Mrs. Allen highlighted major areas of the special education program: grant funding / budget offsets, contracted services, transportation, and staffing. The district has for the last two years employed a physical therapist, however, following a recent resignation, the position is now filled through contracted services. This will continue next year. The district contracts with Van Pool Transportation, and is in the last year of a three-year contract for in-district students, and in the first of a three-year contract for out of district runs. Monitors are required by student IEPs.

Mrs. Allen reviewed special education staff, saying there are three categories: general special education instructional assistant assigned either by content or grade level; those who are wed to students as 1:1 or 2:1 paraprofessionals; program assistant, assigned to a sub-separate program.

Mrs. Allen said there are 72.1 FTE special education assistants in the district, and noted this is a very high number compared to neighboring districts.

Dr. Nash noted the district spends \$2.3 million in instructional assistant salaries.

Mrs. Allen reported all district administrators are on board with the co-teaching model as outlined in the district personnel reorganization presentation. Each building principal is willing to trade in two special education instructional assistants to fund a special education teacher in a classroom with a grade level or content based instructor. Using the figure of \$26,000 per assistant, this would allow \$52,000 per building.

Mrs. Kabala expressed concern that this would result in 13 instructional assistants losing their jobs.

Mrs. Allen and Dr. Nash said there is a net reduction of 10.4 assistants, and noted there are many special education certified teachers among the instructional assistants, who could apply for the new positions.

Mrs. Kabala asked if this is stage one of the reductions, and whether there will be additional cuts.

Mrs. Allen said there will be another phase.

Dr. Nash said there is no alternative as the current model of special education is out of compliance with state and federal law. There can be no pull-out services by an uncertified individual. Dr. Nash noted some of the district's assistants are currently being used in another capacities.

Mrs. Allen is in the process of developing program descriptions for the sub-separate program.

Mrs. Rabbitt requested follow up on out-of-district placements and what is in the pipeline. Mrs. Rabbitt expressed concern about equity in the sub-separate program as there is only a program at Mason Road School, and Dudley Elementary School students are transported to Charlton. Mrs. Rabbit also requested a projection as the district moves forward with the co-teaching model, and as students transition from one school to the next.

Mrs. Allen noted we are not eliminating any current special education teacher, but are adding them to improve the delivery of services.

Dr. Nash said we need to identify entry and exit criteria.

The district allows instructional assistants to develop a skill set through several professional development opportunities. Mrs. Rabbitt said the general special education instructional assistants should be aligned by a skillset that will help the student.

Mrs. Allen discussed the deployment of Team Chairpersons as administrative positions. There are currently five team chairs. This is a reduction of one due to a resignation that was not replaced. Mrs. Allen is proposing to move to four and would like to bargain them out of the teachers' contract. They will no longer be a building-based role. The salary for this 210-day position is proposed as up to \$87,000

Mrs. Kabala stated this salary would not be an incentive for those already at the top of the salary scale, especially as they work more days.

Dr. Nash said this is good training for aspiring administrators.

Mrs. Allen spoke about the need for an additional Board Certified Behavioral Analyst. There is presently one on staff. This would break the caseload into elementary and secondary.

Mrs. Allen also requested a salary increase for the position of the special education department's administrative secretary. Mrs. Allen created a job description for that positions, as well as a job description for a transportation assistant at an additional stipend of \$5,000.

Mrs. Aucoin said this will be discussed during the upcoming negotiations of the Wage and Benefit Schedule for Support Personnel.

Elementary Principals:

Kathleen E. Pastore, Heritage School

Mrs. Pastore thanked the committee for its support of the sub-separate program at her building. She said it has made a world of difference.

Mrs. Pastore said class sizes at Heritage School have been static since October. Mrs. Pastore is requesting to share a library coordinator with Charlton Elementary School. Dudley Elementary School and Mason Road School would share a position, with the cost borne by transferring cafeteria monitors to the cafeteria revolving fund. An additional request is for the grade 4 special education co-teacher, the cost of which will be offset by the reduction of two instructional assistants.

Mrs. Pastore requested some capital improvements to the 30-year-old school, including the handicapped accessible ramp outside of grade 2 classroom, and the railing in the circular stair well, as well as moving a propane tank.

Diane D. Seibold, Dudley Elementary School

Mrs. Seibold said Dudley Elementary School class sizes experienced a slight difference between October and February. Mrs. Seibold said grade 2 will increase by one section, and will be staffed by a teacher who will move from grade 3 and

loop. Staffing requests are the shared library coordinator and the grade 3 special education teacher funded by the trading of two instructional assistants.

Capital expenses are for cafeteria tables.

Lori A. Pacheco, Charlton Elementary School

Mrs. Pacheco said there is no significant change with 141 kindergarten students projected for next year. Mrs. Pacheco is requesting a kindergarten teacher to decrease class sizes. This will be accomplished by transferring a teacher from Mason Road School.

Mrs. Pacheco's co-teacher will be in grade 1. Her 2020 building improvement request is for a new thermostat in the main foyer.

Jennifer A. Desto, Mason Road School

Mason Road School's grade 1 will be reduced from six to five sections. Mrs. Desto is requesting a co-teacher for kindergarten, and a new intercom system.

Mrs. Aucoin reviewed the rules for the superintendent finalist interviews scheduled for Monday and Tuesday, February 11 and 12. She asked members to forward to her their two candidate questions.

There will be an opportunity to share feedback from the site visits and reference checks.

Mrs. Rabbitt requested to start the Feb. 27, 2019 meeting earlier.

IV. Next Meeting Dates

School Committee Meetings:

- Superintendent Finalists Interviews: Monday, February 11, 2019, Superintendent Finalists Interviews, 5-6 p.m. and 6:30-7:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, February 12, 2019, Superintendent Finalists Interviews, 5-6 p.m. and 6:30-7:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, February 13, 2019, Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 7 p.m.
- Wednesday, February 27, 2019, Charlton Middle School, 6 p.m.

Budget and Finance Subcommittee: Monday, February 11, 2019, Shepherd Hill Regional High School 8:30 a.m.

Policy Review Subcommittee: Thursday, February 28, 2019, Shepherd Hill Regional High School, 9 a.m.

Negotiation Meeting, Feb. 28 from 4-6 p.m.

V. Executive Session: 2. "To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel." And to return for a vote if necessary and to adjourn.

The chair entertained a motion to enter executive session and this was approved by unanimous roll call vote at 9:20 p.m.

The committee returned to open session at 10:18 p.m.

VI. Adjourn

A motion by C. Kabala, seconded by S. Reed to adjourn the meeting was approved by unanimous vote at 10:18 p.m.

Items used for this meeting include FY 20 budgets for Mason Road School, Charlton Elementary School, Dudley Elementary School, Heritage School.