

Approved + released
4/2/15 DH

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
PUBLIC HEARING--BUDGET & RESTRUCTURING
THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2015
TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM

1. Call to order: 6:07 P M.

Present: Michael Niles, Michael Barbaro, Susan Burdsall, Dawn Harris
Salah Khelifaoui-Superintendent
Mark Chapulis-TMS/Business Management team

S. Khelifaoui gave a presentation that detailed the reconfiguration proposal with a slight variation regarding Option A. He gave history of the budget from May, 2014 on, reviewing the original figures and subsequent changes due to required reductions. The FY16 budget is based on many of those revisions, because many of the cuts are repeating. The employees agreed to a 0% increase but contractual increases amounted to \$150,000. The Indirect Costs of \$3,769,520 is \$350,000 higher than estimated for the FY16 budget. He stressed it is still an estimation. It includes insurance and unemployment increases but there could be additional expenses above that. State funds as proposed by the Governor are estimated at \$11,281,000 and local aid is projected to be \$4,945,444. Subtracting the indirect costs leaves \$12,756,969; that reflects a \$289,705 decrease from the corrected FY15 budget. Grants and revolving funds bring the available budget to \$13,849,114. Full day Kindergarten is not funded in the states FY16 budget. The Murdock Trust award of \$165,000 is entirely dedicated to supporting expenses. A level service budget creates a deficit of \$685,695; additional cuts totaling that amount need to be determined.

He reviewed the Revised Option A to better facilitate the use of the specialists. The resulting costs and space assignment changes were explained. The realignment of grades and the proposed restructure based on student population projections was explained. Non-teaching positions account for 86% of the cuts; those are administration and central office positions. The pros and cons of each Option and the question of keeping the Marvin building were discussed. The Toy Town Elementary and Memorial School buildings were compared to each other.

6:50 PM S. Burdsall moved to extend the period of time for the Public Hearing or the budget presentation and questions and answers and to delay the scheduled regular meeting. Second by M. Barbaro. Approved 4-0-0.

Amy Mizhir and Deb Delbono gave a presentation to show how and why Memorial School is best for the district's youngest learners. They stressed the importance of NAEYC accreditation and its' requirements and the ADA compliant features. Room size and storage space, as well as the library were noted. They stated that Memorial prepares the students for the upper elementary grades and explained how grade 3 could fit into the design of the school again.

Gail Smith, who worked for 41 years in the district, asked questions about many line items. An administrator will respond to those whose answers were not readily available. S. Burdsall

noted the committee will have explanations and details before it votes on the budget. There is another Public Hearing next Thursday, March 19th. G. Smith also suggested several areas where saving could be realized.

Danielle Hart asked for clarification regarding the Kindergarten reimbursement from the state. She voiced concerns about playground safety and vandalism to the structures.

Len Mackey explained how the 5th grade would be integrated into the middle school philosophy and framework. He noted the proposal is not what the district wants but has faith all can adapt and make it work. He said the proposal takes into account the totality of what is in the best interest of the largest number of kids with best possible outcome. D. Hart voiced concern about bussing the 5th graders with the high school students. S. Khelfaoui stated alternate bus schedules have been looked at. She stated the Memorial environment is exemplary and a great segue to the upper grades. She worries about the path of our future if the students do not get a great start at Memorial.

Patricia Paige, Kindergarten teacher, explained the process and importance of NAEYC accreditation and the difficulty achieving that at TTE. Areas on concern included the playground, the size and high cost to renovate classrooms and bathroom availability.

Maureen Ward, an educator who recently moved to Winchendon, advised the committee to not reduce the administration at the middle or high school. She noted additional costs not yet mentioned. She suggested the CEO work a 4 day a week to create savings.

Catherine LaBrack noted the lack of air conditioning at TTE could be difficult for the younger students. Adequate and proper ALL classroom space concerns were noted.

Amy Shea approved of bringing the 3rd and 4th grades to Memorial because they are already familiar with it. She noted the importance of consistency and her sons' pride of his school.

Sue Cochran, who has student at the Murdock Academy, voiced opposition to moving the school to the Memorial building. The high school would be better.

Steve Haddad, Murdock Academy Director, noted the job is very challenging but worthwhile and has worked better than previous options. He told several success stories and explained why the program is so successful. He reported while the students like being at a separate location, they are fine with moving anywhere except the high school. Mr. Haddad agreed with them. He said the school is changing lives and making a difference.

D. Harris announced the Public Hearing will continue at 6:00 on March 19th. Residents may also reach committee members by email or phone.

In response to a comment by Maureen Ward, S. Khelfaoui noted he has been trying to promote shared services for 2 years. He invited her to join any committee. He stated a small town like Winchendon should start slowly to move to regionalization.

The committee has to vote on bottom line figure but not on the proposals by March 19th.

8:32 PM. M. Barbaro moved to adjourn from the Public Hearing and take a 5-minute recess. Second by M. Niles. Approved 4-0-0.

3/12/15

Respectfully submitted: _____
Barrie E. Martins, School Committee Recording Secretary