

Marlborough Board of Education

Regular Meeting

February 25, 2016

Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School Library/Media Center

1. Call to Order

Chairman Ruth Kelly called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

BOE Members Present:

Present and seated were Ruth Kelly, Wes Skorski, Louise Concodello, Betty O'Brien, Susan Rapelye, Dr. Judithe Kaplan, Mimi LaPoint, Theresa Brysgel and Patrick Pabouet.

Administration Present:

Dr. David Sklarz, Superintendent
Dan White, Principal
Kim Kelley, Vice Principal

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Celebrations

Vice Principal Kelley shared a slideshow of February events and noted that the students celebrated the 100th day of school. Ms. Kelley noted that the students also earned a Paws recess, which allowed her and Principal White to share some outside time with the students. Ms. Kelley noted that the Fifth Grade continued their Power of Words workshops, noting that each class is reading the book, Wonder, together.

4. Public Comments

Cliff Denniss, 111 Cheney Road, member of the Board of Finance, but speaking as an individual, commented that he hopes the school is also addressing how the power of words can have an impact in social media, noting that bullying can take place on social media. Ms. Kelley commented that the Power of Words curriculum is presented by AHM and utilizes skit situations to help students understand different scenarios and the influence of words. She noted that they have begun to discuss social media and noted that Internet Safety is coming up to be presented to the fifth and sixth grade students.

Dick Shea, Bull Hill Road, member of the Board of Selectmen, but speaking as an individual, commented that there will be additional cuts made at the State level and noted that he feels that a tax increase is inevitable. He encouraged the Board to keep the interest of the taxpayers in mind when looking at their budget.

5. Additions to the Agenda

There were no additions made to the agenda.

6. Consent Agenda

6.1 Minutes of 1/28/16 special meeting (Encl. 6.1 A), 1/28/2016 regular business meeting (Encl. 6.1B) and 2/11/16 special meeting (Encl. 6.1C);

6.2 Personnel Actions-none;

6.3 Reports-receive and file the following document: monthly enrollment report (Encl. 6.3);

6.4 Grants-none;

6.5 Approval of Policy Revisions: (Reference: January 28, 2016 Agenda, Encl. 9.3)

Louise Concodello asked to pull Encl. 6.1C.

Louise Concodello made a motion to approve the consent agenda items with the following correction being made to Encl. 6.1C 2/11/16 special meeting minutes as follows: Page 4, the last sentence should be revised to read as, "Theresa Brysgel left the meeting at 7:55 p.m. The motion was seconded by Dr. Judithe Kaplan and carried by a unanimous vote.

7. Oral Reports

7.1 Advisory Groups

School Advisory Council- Principal White noted that there was a fire drill at the school on February 23, 2016, noting that they took advantage of the nice weather to practice. Mr. White noted that SBAC testing was discussed and will begin in April, with two weeks of testing prior to April vacation and two weeks after. Mr. White noted that bus protocol was discussed, noting that the bus is a less structured environment. He noted that it was agreed that classroom teachers should not be involved in bus situations. He noted that behavior issues are typically addressed with warnings and seat relocations. Mr. White noted that the bus driver is required to fill out a bus conduct report when incidents occur. Mr. White noted that bus monitor/aids were discussed and noted the potential cost of these monitors to be approximately \$43k per school year. He commented that at this time the usage of monitors is cost prohibitive. He noted that most situations are minor and noted that there are consequences in place.

7.2 Subcommittees

BOE Outreach-Theresa Brysgel shared a report of her findings with the Board and reviewed themes of that report. Ms. Brysgel noted that a common question that she heard was regarding decreasing enrollment, noting that residents were questioning why the budget didn't decrease as the enrollment went down. She also noted that there were concerns regarding how surplus funds are utilized by the Board, noting that some residents felt that the money should be given back to the town while other residents felt the money should be utilized by the school. Ms. Brysgel noted that some residents were looking to have a designated STEM program in place at the elementary school and noted that there were comments made by residents that they would like to see the tech improvements continue. Mr. Skorski commented that the need for a STEM program was heard from several of the groups and noted that he thinks it is important to ensure the school is teaching and utilizing STEM projects. He questioned if going forward there is a need to have a designated person facilitating these projects. Mr. Skorski noted that he thinks it is important that current teachers are trained on how to utilize technology. Ms. Concodello questioned if the teachers are trained. Ms. Kelley noted that they are. Mr. White noted that two grants were received through the Marlborough Education Foundation which allowed for the purchase of Dash and Dot robots to be utilized to support science curriculum. Ms. Brysgel noted that both the Moms Club and the Senior Center noted that they would like to have greater interaction with the school and an increase in intergenerational activities. She noted that residents from the Senior Center noted that they liked the slideshow that used to be shared with them highlighting what is going on at the school. Mr. Skorski noted that the Senior Center has been looking to increase interaction with the school for the past three years and questioned how this is being or will be addressed. Principal White noted that someone from the school visits the Senior Center to personally invite them to each school event and noted that this is something they began doing this year. Ms. Brysgel noted that the community responded positively to the full day kindergarten program as well as to the placement of paraprofessionals in younger classrooms. She noted that many residents would like to see a plan for long term maintenance in place. Ms. Brysgel noted that some residents questioned if the library is still utilized as technology increased. Mr. Skorski commented that technology training also takes place in the library.

7.3 Chairperson – There were no new items discussed.

7.4 Superintendent and Administrative Team-There were no new items discussed.

8. Unfinished Business

There were no items to discuss.

9. New Business

9.1 Review, Discuss and Take Action on Superintendent's Proposed FY 2016-17 Budget
(Enclosure 9.1)

Louise Concodello made a motion that the Board approve a bottom line budget of \$7,344,854 for FY 2016-17 to forward to the Marlborough Board of Finance for consideration. The motion was seconded by Dr. Judithe Kaplan. The motion did not carry.

Discussion:

Dr. Sklarz made a proposal to the Board to add funds to the contingency account. He noted an \$8,660 savings in health insurance and proposed moving that full amount to the contingency account. He also proposed moving \$12,773 from the 612 Instructional Technology account, which is the equivalent amount needed to fund the STAR program, which he noted will now be funded with the REAP Grant. Dr. Sklarz noted that there is currently \$8k in the contingency account and noted that with these additions, the contingency account would have a total of \$29,993. Ms. Brysgel questioned if Dr. Sklarz believed that this was too large of an amount or too small of an amount to have in the contingency fund. Dr. Sklarz commented that he feels it will establish a safety cushion to address needs and unexpected items. Dr. Sklarz noted that the freezer will be purchased out of this year's funds and noted that the bottom line budget will not change based on this proposal.

Class size was discussed. Ms. Brysgel questioned how many are currently enrolled in kindergarten. Principal White noted that there are currently 54 kindergarteners enrolled and commented that they continue to do an outreach via the Rivereast to encourage registration. It was noted that with the current enrollment numbers, there will be three classes in kindergarten, with 17-18 students/class and a full-time paraprofessional in each classroom. Ms. Brysgel noted her concern regarding the reduction from 28 teachers to 26 teachers, commenting that she is concerned that they are losing quality teachers. She commented that she feels that 54 is a high number for kindergarten. She also commented that she would like to see a STEM teacher put in place. Ms. Brysgel noted that the Moms Club shared concerns that classes are too big. Ms. LaPoint noted her concerns regarding the reduction of teachers, noting that second grade has high enrollment numbers at 21/class. She questioned how things went in the classroom this year. She also commented that 6th grade is currently showing an enrollment of 93 students with 4 teachers, 24 kids/class. She raised the question should the number of teachers be reduced. Ms. LaPoint commented that she sees four possible points of concern for class size. Ms. Rapelye questioned if funds from the contingency account could be utilized to fund a teacher. It was noted that they cannot and that it would be a separate increase in the salaries account. Ms. Concodello

commented that it is not the Board's decision regarding the number of teachers that are allocated per grade. Ms. Kelly commented that she doesn't agree with the recommendation for an increase in the number of teachers, and commented that she feels they should rely on the recommendation of the administration. Ms. Kelly questioned how things went in first grade this year. Mr. White commented that he would prefer to have 4 teachers in first grade, noting that 21/class is a lot and noted that there is limited paraprofessional support. Mr. Skorski commented that he has gotten feedback that there have been some concerns raised in first grade regarding needs being met. Mr. White noted that there have been occasional concerns raised at the first grade level. Ms. O'Brien questioned why the psychologist and social worker are not assisting with the issue. Mr. Skorski commented that there are academic issues. Ms. O'Brien commented that there are three reading/math teachers to offer additional support in place. Ms. LaPoint commented that not all students need services, but noted that larger classrooms have a lot of needs. Ms. Kelly commented that the Board had told the administration that if there was an issue in first grade, then paraprofessional support could be requested. She noted that this never happened, so she assumed the teacher was handling any issues. Ms. Rapelye commented that she feels there is a concern present in first grade and asked if a paraprofessional would help with the situation. Mr. White noted that it would be beneficial, but commented that he thinks the teacher are doing a great job. He noted that big groups do have challenges. Mr. White noted that he is working to balance this year's budget and not that there are no funds in the budget to support additional paraprofessionals. Mr. Skorski commented that the issue in first grade was raised in October, 2015. It was noted that additional math support is offered in the afternoon in first grade based off this concern. Ms. Brysgel commented that she heard concerns regarding first grade in the community outreach and noted that she wants to incorporate community concern about class size, noting that she thinks this is what is right for the school. Dr. Sklarz commented that the conversation regarding class size will continue, noting continuing enrollment changes. Ms. Concodello questioned how much it would be to add a teacher. It was noted that it will cost approximately \$78k and \$16k for a paraprofessional.

Dr. Kaplan questioned if additional support is needed for the social worker, noting that the workload seems high. Ms. O'Brien commented that the social worker has a lot of support, noting that there are currently two psychologists and a social worker in place.

Theresa Brysgel made a motion to add to the Proposed FY 2016-17 Budget one full time equivalent teacher and increase the total number of full time teacher equivalents from 26 to 27. The motion was seconded by Mimi LaPoint.

Discussion:

Dr. Sklarz questioned if the budget is reduced by the Board of Finance, does the Board want to keep the number of teachers at 27. Mr. Pabouet commented that he thinks the Board should be prepared for a reduction. Mr. Skorski commented that reductions are still being made by the Board of Education to this budget. Ms. Kelly commented that no one wants to lose a teacher, and noted, however, that the reality is, we are going to be losing teachers. She commented that she thinks the Board needs to be responsible stewards.

Mimi LaPoint, Dr. Judithe Kaplan, Susan Rapelye, Theresa Brysgel and Wes Skorski voted in favor of the motion. Patrick Pabouet, Louise Concodello, Ruth Kelley and Betty O'Brien were opposed to the motion. The motion carried.

Ms. Rapelye questioned what items could potentially be addressed by contingency funds. Dr. Sklarz noted that Mr. Corsa recommended that the Generator/Heating be repaired/replaced with an approximate cost of \$18k. It was noted that funds are needed for unforeseen repairs, such as the oven. Dr. Sklarz commented that a more solid contingency number would be \$50k, recognizing that this is not possible at this point.

Betty O'Brien made a motion that the Board approve the transfer of \$8,660 from health insurance savings and \$12,773 from the 612 Instructional Technology account to the \$8k in the Contingency account for a total of \$29,993. The motion was seconded by Louise Concodello.

Discussion:

Dr. Sklarz noted that if these funds are not utilized then the Board will have to decide if that money should go back to the Town or remain in the Board of Education account. Dr. Sklarz commented that there has been a surplus in past years because the Board has been fiscally conservative. Ms. O'Brien noted that they heard from the Town that there was a concern about the Board spending the surplus funds. Ms. Kelly commented that the insurance money was a savings and was not taken out of the budget. Ms. LaPoint commented that the Town votes for the education budget, which she commented is a bottom line budget. Ms. LaPoint commented that the Town does not instruct the Board how that money should be spent. Ms. Brysgel commented that the contingency fund is for building funds and noted that if there is some left, it should go back to the Town. She commented that the entire surplus amount does not have to go back to the Town. Ms. Rapelye commented that with \$18k in pending repairs, she is not sure how much would be left. Mr. Skorski commented that contingency funds are also for unexpected things that happen, not just to address a specific list of known items. Ms. O'Brien commented that if the insurance did not decrease, that money would not be there. She noted that she thinks that they have to recognize the

Town budget concerns and commented that she thinks contingency funds should be used for repairs.

This motion was not voted on.

Betty O'Brien made a motion that if there is any money left in the contingency account, it will be returned to the Town. The motion was seconded by Louise Concodello.

Discussion:

Ms. LaPoint questioned if it was possible to give a portion of the funds back to the town, but to keep the \$12k portion which was transferred from the instructional account. Theresa Brysgel commented that she is comfortable that any money left in the contingency account should be returned to the Town.

Ruth Kelly, Betty O'Brien, Wes Skorski, Theresa Brysgel, Susan Rapelye, Louise Concodello, and Patrick Pabouet voted in favor of the motion. Mimi LaPoint and Dr. Judithe Kaplan were opposed to the motion. The motion carried.

Dr. Judithe Kaplan made a motion that the Board approve a bottom line budget of \$7,422,854 for FY 2016-17 to forward to the Marlborough Board of Finance for consideration. The motion was seconded by Theresa Brysgel and carried by a unanimous vote.

The proposed budget includes an increase of \$26,587.

9.2 Review February Financial Report (Encl. 9.2)

Dr. Sklarz noted the deficit in Group Insurance due to plan changes. Dr. Sklarz noted a deficit for 112 Substitute Teachers, noting that there are three teachers who are going out on planned leave. He noted that 1.5 paraprofessional positions were added to support special needs. He noted a deficit also in 561 Magnet School Tuition due to enrollment of two more students than anticipated in Magnet Schools. Dr. Sklarz noted a fund balance in 562 Out of District Placement, noting that BCBA training continues, allowing for two students to be maintained in district. Dr. Sklarz noted a fund balance in 590 Advertising, noting that some of these funds will need to be utilized to advertise for the Physical Education position. Dr. Sklarz noted an anticipate fund balance of \$9,503.48.

10. Public Comments

Richard Shea, Bull Hill Road, member of the Board of Selectmen, but speaking as an individual, commented that he is disappointed with the final result of the Board's budget, noting that he

had been encouraged in the past by what he thought was a more focused approach to decrease the budget. Mr. Shea commented that he thinks there is too much emphasis on the class size limitation, commenting that through what he has seen, issues often arise because of difficulty with students, not class size. He commented that there are great programs in place to facilitate a larger classroom, including technology and the Spanish program. He commented that he is confident that the Board will face opposition from the public regarding their proposed budget.

Cliff Denniss, 111 Cheney Road, member of the Board of Finance, but speaking as an individual, thanked the Outreach Committee for taking the time to get feedback from the public. Mr. Denniss commented that taxpayers do not vote on a bottom line budget with regards to education, but rather they vote on the education budget based on the information provided to them regarding what the Board intends to spend the money on. He commented that he feels surplus funds should be returned because the public approved funds were not utilized the way they were told they would be.

Pam Farrington, 95 Jerry Daniels Road, applauded the Board for retaining one teacher and commented that guidelines are put in place for a reason. Ms. Farrington commented that the differences in the classroom when class sizes increase is remarkable and noted that while paraprofessionals are highly valued, they are not educators. She commented that she thinks it is important to keep class size low so that students can be given the individual attention that they need. Ms. Farrington commented that she believes that it is the role of the Board of Education to do what is best for the child and commented that she thinks it is ludicrous that anyone would say that this Board is not being fiscally responsible.

11. Communications

- 11.1 FY 2016-17 Approved Academic Calendar
- 11.2 Staff Vacancy Summary

12. Future Meetings & Topics

- 12.1 Policy subcommittee meeting, Thursday, March 24, 2016, 6:00pm
- 12.2 Next regular business meeting, Thursday, March 24, 2016, 7:00pm
- 12.3 Proposed meeting, to be confirmed, Board of Finance, March 17, 2016, 7:00pm

13. Adjournment

Louise Concodello made a motion to adjourn meeting at 8:57 p.m. The motion was seconded by Theresa Brysgel and carried by a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted
Karen DeCorleto