



**Columbia Board of Education**  
**Special Meeting & Public Budget Hearing Minutes**  
**February 24, 2014**

7:00 P.M.

Horace W. Porter School Cafeteria

- Board Members Present: Kerry Hoffman-Chairperson, Karin Vertefeuille-Vice Chairperson, David Crim, Christopher Lent, Lisa Napolitano, Kathy Tolsdorf
- Board Members Absent: Lauren Perrotti-Verboven
- Administrators Present: Superintendent Lol Fearon, Principal Alyssa Gwinnell, Director of Student Services Jackie Middleton, Assistant Principal/Data Coordinator Charles Shooshan
- Others Present: Jeanette Morales, Louise Nowak, Linette Dooley, Caroline Nowyckyj, Diane Schatz, Todd Shepard, Finance Director Bev Ciurylo, Steve Piro

**I. Call to Order**

Chairperson Kerry Hoffman called the February 24, 2014, Special Meeting and Public Budget Hearing to order at 7:05 p.m.

**II. Audience of Citizens**

Time allotted for public participation is twenty (20) minutes; time allotted for an individual speaker is three (3) minutes.

**III. 2014/2015 Budget Presentation & Discussion – Mr. Lol Fearon, Columbia Superintendent**

**Mr. Fearon** thanked audience members for attending this evening's budget meeting. He began with a budget overview which included Board of Education priority areas of long-range planning and community engagement, as well as the implementation of state-wide initiatives of common core standards, teacher evaluation and student assessment.

The challenges facing the Board of Education are district declining enrollment, the impact of student magnet school choices and the implementation of state mandated initiatives.

The proposed budget has no changes to the current PK-8 programs.

The PK program provides early identification and intervention services to a combination of special needs students and typically developing peers. The program currently serves 28 students ages 3 and 4. Parents of the typically developing peers pay tuition.

The proposed budget includes Porter's after school program which has served 167 students (cumulative) in 38 club activities through three sessions this school year. A mid-year survey of parents rated the quality of clubs offered at 29% feeling the clubs offered were excellent, 32% good and 4% fair.

The proposed budget continues with high school options of Windham, Bolton and E.O. Smith. It also includes continued magnet school choices.

The Superintendent's budget request for 2014/2015 is for \$12,042,836; an increase of \$586,860 over the 2013/14 budget or an increase of 5.12%. Superintendent Fearon reviewed the 2014/15 areas of budget increase, areas of decrease and grant offsets.

Board Member Discussion:

- **Mrs. Hoffman** asked for clarification of line item 610-Supplies. **Mr. Fearon** explained that there was a budget surplus at the end of the 2012/13 school year and that money was used to purchase supplies for the 2013/14 school year. The 2014/15 supply dollar amount represents specific teacher requests.
- **Chris Lent** asked what changes were made to the budget since the BOE's 2/19/14 meeting. **Mr. Fearon** explained numbers were readjusted for medical benefits, FICA and Medicare. Based on the curriculum development work that will be done with Eastconn, salaries/co-curricular development numbers were adjusted.
- **Lisa Napolitano** asked about the cut in adult education. **Mr. Fearon** explained adult ed grant funding.
- **Karin Vertefeuille** asked when we would know about the Anthem rates. **Mrs. Ciurylo** said it could be April or May.

**Mr. Fearon** invited citizens to contact him if anyone has budget questions or concerns. **Mrs. Hoffman** thanked Mr. Fearon for his presentation.

**IV. 2014/2015 Budget Input**

- **Diane Schatz** asked if the middle school art teacher's current .7 FTE position was being increased to a full time position next year. **Mr. Fearon** explained the .7 FTE position is being increased to a .8 FTE position and that if something is added to the budget something else must be taken away. The head count for teachers remains the same and no teachers are planning to retire at this time.
- **Jeanette Morales** thinks the Board will have a hard time getting a 5.12% increase passed.
- **Todd Shepard** asked how MBR will be determined. **Mr. Fearon** explained a combination of reduced enrollment with flat funding could get us in trouble. This budget recaptures what was missing in last year's budget.
- **Steve Piro** said it should be made known to the public that \$170,000 of magnet school tuition was not accounted for in the 2013/14 budget and that the Board is finding the funds to cover this cost.

**V. Adjournment**

K. Hoffman **MOVED** and C. Lent **SECONDED** to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karin Vertefeuille  
Columbia Board of Education Vice Chairperson