

Special Meeting Minutes
PUBLIC HEARING
Monday, February 26, 2018
Regular Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
Horace W. Porter School Cafeteria

Board Members Present: Christopher Lent, Kathy Tolsdorf, Gary Littlefield, Karin Vertefeuille, Linette Dooley

Absent: James Chakulski, David Crim

Others Present: Lol Fearon-Superintendent, Alyssa Gwinnell-Principal, Barbara Wilson-Student Services Director, Beverly Ciurylo-Town Finance Director, Judy Ortiz, Mike O'Hearn, Tom Boardman

I. Call to Order Chairman Christopher Lent called the special meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Comments from the Audience (Bylaws of the Board #9300)

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

No comments were received at this time.

IV. Presentation

Presentation and Review of the Superintendents 2018-2019 Budget

Mr. Fearon provided a PowerPoint presentation outlining the 2018-19 budget. The focus of the budget includes long-range planning, maintaining and improving current programs and improving student success. The budget supports the Boards commitment to class size at the primary grades, improving student support services in literacy and mathematics, implementing an intervention/coaching model and pursuit of NAEYC Accreditation for preschool. The review included the impact of federal grant reductions, increases and decreases to the budget and enrollment projections. There are several areas of expenditures which the Board cannot control such as the Towns appropriated cost for magnet school students, health insurance and tuition costs.

The total budget request for 2018-2019 is \$12,825,454 which results in a budget decrease of 1.85% from 2017-2018.

Mr. Lent asked if there were questions or comments from the audience.

Mr. Michael O'Hearn, 41 Doubleday Rd. asked for clarification of acronyms used during the presentation including MBR. He also asked for clarification of the SRBI Model Intervention change to a Coaching Model.

Mr. Fearon explained MBR is the minimum budget requirement for the town to appropriate each budget year. With some statutory exceptions, the appropriation cannot fall below the previous year's.

SRBI stands for Scientific Research Based Intervention. SRBI is a three tiered intervention model with the focus on students and includes pull out services. The Intervention Coaching model focuses on the student but also includes embedded professional development for teachers and provides a more holistic approach to intervention services.

Mr. O'Hearn asked for clarification of how the reductions in State funding impacts Columbia.

Mr. Fearon said this year funding was reduced by \$330,000 and the Town is absorbing the reduction. Next years' reduction is estimated to be \$120,000 at this time but it is a very fluid figure.

XI. Columbia Board of Education Member Remarks

L. Dooley feels the budget is appropriate and she had no questions or concerns.

K. Tolsdorf expressed concerns about the proposed transfer of capital costs to operating costs and the MBR.

Mrs. Ciurylo has confirmed that the transfer is acceptable with the Town's auditors.

K. Tolsdorf said she was still concerned and opposed to putting capital expenses into the operating budget to bring the proposed budget up to the required MBR. She stated she understands and supports the new MBR law which allows new ways to reduce MBR, but did not understand how the new law provided for transfers from the capital budget to the operational budget.

Mrs. Tolsdorf expressed her support for all the other changes proposed by Mr. Fearon and the Board as they would help bring our proposed budget up to meet next year's MBR and help ensure our budget could meet contingencies that have been problematic in the recent past.

Mr. Fearon reassured Mrs. Tolsdorf that he had discussed the capital transfers with authorities and there should be no concerns about the transfers.

Mrs. Tolsdorf then inquired whether or not there were not other ways (other than transfers from the capital budget to operational budget) that the Board or Administration might add to the proposed budget that would allow the school to meet MBR. Mrs. Tolsdorf asked if money we were required to add could go directly to classrooms, students, or programming rather than to repairs/capital improvements that were normally paid out of the town budget.

Mr. Fearon and Mrs. Gwinnell pointed out the recent improvements to programming at Porter and reassured Mrs. Tolsdorf that there were no further needs in next year's programming that would require money being added.

K. Vertefeuille asked how much the MBR will be impacted by the budget reduction. She also asked how will the reduction in MBR affects future MBR and wanted to ensure we were encompassing all the needs of the school given past reductions.

Mr. Fearon explained the proposed budget is \$283,000 less than the 2017-18 budget. ECS was reduced by approximately \$126,000 and we are able to waive a reduction of high school enrollment by \$12,000.

G. Littlefield is satisfied with the budget as presented. He feels the budget supports education and we are not cutting services. He received comments from senior citizens asking why the BOE budget isn't decreasing if enrollment is. He is concerned with anticipated reductions in State appropriations and grants in 2018-19 and the impact to Towns. He feels the budget shows the Boards good faith and will be supported by many people in Town.

K. Tolsdorf again expressed her concern regarding reducing the MBR. She feels the funds should be maintained in the budget in order to maintain the current MBR.

Mr. Fearon said the current budget supports the needs of the school and he feels it is a responsible budget to present to the Town.

K. Tolsdorf expressed her concerns and adamantly opposes reduction of the MBR.

L. Dooley said the Board is presenting actuals, not including additional funds to maintain MBR. She maintains her support of the budget as presented.

XII. Adjournment

G. Littlefield MOVED, L. Dooley SECONDED to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m.
MOTION CARRIES 5:0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Tolsdorf, Vice Chairperson/Secretary