

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF
January 7, 2014
Bedford High School - Large Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

At 8:40 p.m., Mr. Pierce called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Ms. Seibert, Mr. Hafer, Mr. McAllister and Ms. Guay. Miss Emily Moss, student representative, was also in attendance.

2. Comments from Public

None

3. Policy Approval: Tutoring

Mr. Sills asked the School Committee to approve the Tutoring for Pay policy that was revised and discussed at the last School Committee meeting.

Ms. Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the revised policy, "Tutoring for Private Pay – File GCRD" as revised.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Sills asked the School Committee to approve an increase in FTE of .5 to .75 for the Adjustment Counselor at Lane School. The Counselor has not been able to meet the needs of special education students at Lane School on a .5 basis and has been doing the work without pay.

Ms. Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the increase the Adjustment Counselor position at Lane School from a .5 to a .75, at a cost not to exceed \$7,000, for this school year.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

4. FY'15 Budget Discussion

Mr. Sills presented his suggestions on reducing the FY'15 budget request by \$900,000 in order to meet the Finance Committee FY'15 budget guideline.

Mr. Sills said that it is important to understand the context of his original budget request. The request was made based on significant increases in enrollment and unprecedented class size at Davis and the High schools. Also, the student body in Bedford is "increasingly more complex" and there are increasingly more mandates requiring the need for teachers to differentiate instruction.

Mr. Sills asked, "How can we balance this situation with Bedford's vision for a well-rounded education with the Town's desire to keep a budget increase to 2.8%?"

Mr. Sills commented that all proposed reductions hurt our existing programs.

Mr. Sills said that he does not expect the School Committee to vote on these proposals tonight. He asked that the School Committee also hold back on commenting on his proposal to eliminate the Lane School foreign language program at this time. He believes it is an option worth considering but he needs to have Barbara Barnett, the Program Director, share her thoughts and concerns with this idea.

Mr. Sills presented reductions in three different rounds for the School Committee to consider, including eliminating the foreign language program at the Lane School.

School Committee members reviewed the proposals and had a few questions and comments.

Mr. McAllister commented that it is important to note that some of the people or the resources needed to do a job may be eliminated but the need does not go away. Someone else will have to do the job with fewer resources. "All proposed cuts have levels of risk involved."

Mr. McAllister said that if we continue to hold off on increasing staff, then we will, as a town, need to accept larger class sizes across the board.

Ms. Seibert said that there were a few items on the reduction list that seemed like easy decisions because they do not affect programs. She determined that these items total approximately \$160,000.

Mr. Hafer asked Mr. Sills to summarize the actual FTE reductions outlined in tonight's proposals. (Not the reduction from the original budget request that asked for an increase in FTEs). Mr. Sills agreed to clarify and provide.

Mr. Hafer said he had some serious mixed feelings about proposing to eliminate the Lane School foreign language program. He wondered why we were not considering cutting other non-programming items like music too?

Ms. Guay said she and many families in town have been huge supporters of the Lane School foreign language program. She also expressed concerns about reductions in the staff of the Bridge programs because these aides are critical to keep students with special needs in the classrooms.

Ms. Emily Moss, student representative, said that eliminating the foreign language program at Lane seems really harsh. She sees it as such a positive experience for the students. She thinks it is a major decision that needs more discussion and thought. She also suggested adding time to the 6th grade language program to help beef up fluency.

Mr. Pierce thanked Mr. Sills for putting together this list of recommendations. He would like a little more time to understand the full impact of the different proposals. He sees Bedford's desire for a well-rounded education at risk.

Mr. Sills agreed to assign some priorities to the list of reductions and to gather more information on the foreign language proposal.

Mr. Sills reminded the School Committee that February 6th is the date that the School Committee is scheduled to present its budget proposal to the Finance Committee.

Ms. Seibert agreed that the eliminating the foreign language program at Lane School has to be made in context of a review of the entire foreign language program. She said that the recent program review never suggested eliminating this program. She said that this is a big change for Bedford and making the decision as part of a budget discussion feels rushed.

Mr. Sills agreed that there must be a new plan for the Foreign Language department and he will do his best to do this over the next couple of weeks. He said that if this can't be done properly, then he will take the idea off the table. However, reductions will have to come elsewhere.

Ms. Seibert pointed out that the Finance Committee guideline is a guideline made without considering the drivers of the School department increase.

Dr. Jackson said that offering foreign language at the elementary level is a value added program. However, we also need to comply with mandates (like adding ELL support) so we are really in a difficult position.

5. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Sills noted that this is Mr. Jones' last week here as Facilities Director. He extends his deep appreciation to Mr. Jones and his hard work he has done for the town. Mr. Sills has been interviewing for his replacements and has come up with three finalists. He expects to make a decision next week.

6. Liaison Reports

Ms. Guay announced that Bedford Education Foundation will be holding a fundraiser at Whole Foods on January 15th.

7. Adjournment

Ms. Seibert made the following motion.

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 10:00

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Pierce	Yes
Mr. Hafer	Yes
Ms. Seibert	Yes
Mr. McAllister	Yes
Ms. Guay	Yes

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
January 7, 2014
Exhibits/Documents

- Policy GCRD – Tutoring for Private Pay
- Revised FY'15 Budget Modifications dated 1/7/2014

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Executive Session
January 7, 2014