

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**December 17, 2019**  
**Large Group Instruction Room, Bedford High School**

**1. Call to Order**

At 7:34 p.m., Ms. Santiago called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Mr. Brosgol, Ms. Guay and Mr. Morrison. Ms. Scoville was delayed and arrived at 7:46 p.m. There were no student representatives present this evening.

**2. Comments from Public**

None

**3. Personnel Report**

Mr. Sills presented the second reading of the two job descriptions within the Superintendent's Office:

- Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent of Schools
- Human Resources Specialist

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the job description for the Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent of Schools as amended**  
**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Morrison**  
**MOTION APPROVED: 4-0-0**

Ms. Guay made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the job description for the Human Resources Specialist as amended**  
**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Morrison**  
**MOTION APPROVED: 4-0-0**

**4. Wellness Policy**

Mr. Sills said that there is no presentation available this evening for the Wellness Policy and asked the members of the School Committee if they prefer to have a presentation before approval of the policy. He said that he would be glad to pass any questions along to Mr. Keith Mangan, Director of Athletics and Wellness for Bedford Public Schools.

Mr. Brosgol said that he would prefer a presentation but he would leave that up to Mr. Sills.

Ms. Guay had some questions but she will be happy to email them to Mr. Sills to pass along to Mr. Mangan.

Mr. Sills said that he will get in touch with Mr. Mangan to present as well as answer any questions at the next School Committee meeting.

## 5. Superintendent's FY21 Budget Proposal Presentation

Mr. Sills started by thanking the Director of Finance, Ms. Julie Kirrane for her hard work helping build their first budget together, he then went on with the presentation.

Mr. Sills outlined community expectations which covered high performing, supportive, safe and caring schools that promote an appreciation of diversity. He also included comprehensive curriculum, athletics, music and the arts, STEM courses, extracurricular activities, college and career readiness as well as cost-conscious planning.

The FY21 budget summary that was presented showed a 4.6% increase from the FY20 budget of \$41,844,356.00. The FY21 proposed budget includes a 3.5% increase in Maintenance of Effort and a 1.1% Expansion request resulting in an overall budget request of \$43,771,017.00. Mr. Sills went on to say that since 2010 we have seen a significant enrollment growth of 265 students which results in a 10% increase.

Mr. Sills pointed out the following increases:

- 2.3% Salaries
- 5.1% Operating Expenses
- 19.7% Special Education Out of District Tuition
- 4.8% Regular Day Bus Transportation
- -7.4% Special Education Transportation

He mentioned that despite aggressive application of Circuit Breaker funding, OOD tuition has had a contractual increase in cost. Other increases include, salary pay steps, lanes, COLA and contract increases in bus transportation which increases regular day buses as well as Athletic buses.

Ms. Kirrane reviewed the detail of the increased expenditures with the School Committee. She mentioned that the tuition budget has already been expanded twice so far this year to accommodate recent changes. She said that the Circuit Breaker reimbursement has gone down and it is now trending upwards but the way CB works is that the payments are always a year in arrears. She noted that the costs of tuition began to rise in 2019 and she sees them continue to rise and that we are fortunate to have credits from the Collaboratives to use towards tuition.

Mr. Sills and Ms. Kirrane discussed three potential options to fund the 3.5% Maintenance of Effort which were presented to the School Committee for review.

1. A budget increase of 4.6%
2. A 3.53% budget increase with a \$450,000.00 OOD FinCom carve-out /reserve fund transfer
3. A 3.5% budget increase with a combination of little to no expansion and potential program reductions

Mr. Brosgol asked if there is a stated policy on Circuit Breaker balances and how we can maintain the balances.

Ms. Kirrane said that Circuit Breaker carry forward balance is reimbursement of a certain percentage and can be as low as 45% at times. She said that the dollar amount can range from \$160,000.00 to \$960,000.00 but it is mostly in the \$300,000.00 to \$400,000.00 range.

Mr. Brosgol asked about the prior year's telephone upgrade costs.

Ms. Kirrane said that she thinks it was around \$40,000.00 but we were able to add \$18,000.00 back into the FY21 budget because the upgrade was a onetime conversion piece.

Mr. Morrison asked for some clarification on Circuit Breaker and also on some of the budget comparisons in the presentation.

Ms. Kirrane explained how the Circuit Breaker process works and clarified the information on the slides to help answer his questions.

Ms. Guay said that the presentation was incredibly detailed and wanted to reiterate that the state sets the tuition costs and that Circuit Breaker was created to absorb the costs of extraordinary students. She also said that she would like to see a real thorough review of Bedford's in-house special education programs.

Mr. Sills mentioned that the 10% increase is due to tuition increase and not due to student increase.

Ms. Guay hopes that at budget time, parents understand that the approved by the state and that some other districts do not include costs for special education in their operating budget for these reasons.

Mr. Morrison suggested that it may not be about the number of students but the complexity and the cost of the mix of students that has significantly changed and that this may be what is making the cost difference. He thinks this is something that should be looked into as it pertains to what costs may look like on the horizon.

Ms. Guay thinks that Bedford is doing an excellent job but noted that as we add more in house programs for students with special needs, we will need to continue to add staff to accommodate these programs. She says that overall this will be a cost savings versus paying for outside services.

Ms. Santiago thanked Ms. Kirrane and said that her presentation was helpful with a more in-depth understanding of the detail of the budget proposal. She said that she strongly supports a discussion with the Finance Committee about the budget process as it applies to some of the costs that are beyond our control. Ms. Santiago believes that students are appropriately placed to meet their needs and that the School and School Committee should be prepared to answer questions about what drives the placement of a student with special education needs.

Mr. Sills then continued on with the explanation of the MOE Expansion with Carve-out. This is a 1.1% additional funding for expansion where the budget drivers for this relate specifically to student needs such as:

- Enrollment – in lieu of adding a 1.0 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher, add a 1.0 TA to support classes over the guideline
- In-District Special Education - programs are cost efficient showing an estimated \$2.2 million dollars in annual cost avoidance
- Social Emotional Support Services – Adding 1.0 counselor at BHS making the current Lighthouse program adjustment counselor full-time improving counselor to student ratio to help with increased numbers of distressed students
- Supporting All Students – Davis .2 Reading Interventionist, .5 Math Interventionist and a Title I grant offset

- Program Improvements – JV Hockey Coach, additional summer days Davis and Lane Assistant Principals, JGMS Guidance Curriculum Coordinator
- Maintenance - .5 Floater Custodian at Davis

Mr. Sills went on to explain the final option which was a 3.5% budget increase without OOD Carve-out/Reserve Fund Transfer which would involve eliminating the expansion request which would have impact on staffing and programs and could have potential cuts and reductions.

*The School Committee had some questions and comments:*

Mr. Brosgol thanked Ms. Kirrane and Mr. Sills. He asked about the Driver I enrollment numbers and asked about 14 students that were unexpected in the total and asked where that number came from.

Mr. Sills explained that there is a lot of movement and that this was just a snapshot in time but mentioned that there was an actual increase in students as well.

Mr. Brosgol had some questions on some of the figures for the cost per student for the Lane SAIL inclusive program and why it appeared that it cost more for those students to remain in house vs outside of district.

Mr. Sills said that it was a miscalculation based on the original number of students that which has since gone down.

Mr. Morrison had questions about the carve-out. He asked how they arrived at the amount of \$450,000.00.

Mr. Sills said that it is an effort to get to 3.5% which is a necessity, even with aggressive use of the Circuit Breaker funding.

Mr. Morrison thanked Ms. Kirrane and Mr. Sills for all of their hard work.

Ms. Guay mentioned that the overview was very thorough. She asked if it would be possible to have a snapshot of the cost of one student to attend LABB, Melmark and out of district collaborative costs for example, in comparison with the in-house program for special education students. She also complimented Ms. Kirrane for her thorough explanation of Circuit Breaker.

Ms. Scoville asked if the co-taught general education classes at Davis were too complex for the SAIL students and wondered if upon their transition to Lane, their classes would be less complex because of the extra SAIL support staff that will be available in the Lane classrooms.

Mr. Sills confirmed that the SAIL students will benefit from the additional support staff in the classroom at the Lane School.

Ms. Santiago asked that if a teaching assistant was hired at Lane in FY21 and then was no longer needed in that classroom in FY22, would there be enough turnover in staff to absorb that teaching assistant somewhere else if the position was no longer needed at the Lane School.

Mr. Sills said that there is typically enough turnover to absorb that teaching assistant, but if the need disappears, the position could be reduced.

Ms. Santiago asked if it was a fair assumption that a student with needs that could not be served in the SAIL program, would they then need to go to a collaborative program.

Mr. Sills said that it would depend on the needs of the child and how the needs of the child progress as the child ages.

Ms. Santiago had questions on the student to staff ratio in the JGMS SAIL program and that it appeared that there were more students than staff.

Mr. Sills explained that some of those students will be moving up to BHS and that ratio will reflect the correct SAIL student to staff ratio.

Ms. Santiago commented on activity fees and thinks it may be something to think about and that we should at least do our due diligence looking into this.

Ms. Guay noted that the number of preschool students with autism has increased and that we will be better prepared for these students with the programs that we are implementing.

## **6. Superintendent Search Update**

Ms. Santiago started by saying that the School Committee has retained the services of MASC, Massachusetts Association of School Committees to help with the search process.

## **7. Superintendent's Report**

Mr. Sills mentioned that there have been a rash of thefts at Bedford High School. He said that there are many parents who are upset by this and have asked about interior cameras. Mr. Sills said that he had never really advocated for internal cameras but he is open to further discussion on this.

Mr. Sills also gave an update on the bus that was involved in a car crash on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December. He said that the students and driver that were on the bus were not harmed. He said thankfully no one else was seriously hurt. Mr. Sills said that they are currently working on a database to be sure that the parents can be notified as quickly as possible in this type of a situation. He said that the first responders did a tremendous job and thanked them for their quick response.

Mr. Morrison asked what the procedure is when something like this happens. He asked how the children are taken care of and how they are assessed to be sure that they haven't been hurt.

Mr. Sills said that the first responders had arrived quickly and when Ms. Beth Benoit, the Principal of the Davis School arrived, she found them playing games with the students on the bus to keep them calm while the situation was handled. He said that the students were not allowed to go home until Ms. Benoit had signed off that each student was ok.

## **8. Minutes**

None

## **9. Adjournment**

**Adjourn to Executive Session for Purposes of Preparing for Contract Negotiations – not to reopen**

Ms. Brosgol made the following motion:

**MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 9:36 p.m. not to reopen.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Morrison**

**MOTION APPROVED 4-0-0**

**Mr. Brosgol** Yes

**Ms. Santiago** Yes

**Ms. Scoville** Yes

**Ms. Guay** Yes

**Mr. Morrison** Yes

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
School Committee Secretary

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**December 17, 2019**

#### **Exhibits/Documents**

- Personnel Report - Job Descriptions Second Reading  
HR Specialist and Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent
- Wellness Policy
- Bedford Public Schools – Superintendent’s Proposed FY21 Budget