

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF
November 30, 2010**

Bedford High School - Large Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

At 7:30 p.m., Mr. Hafer called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Ms. Seibert, Ms. O’Gara, Mr. Pierce and Ms. Bickford. Miss Emma Currier, student representative, was also in attendance.

2. Comments From Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Dr. LaCroix presented the following informational items:

Resignations:

Barbara Rachwal	.5 ESL Teacher – Lane School
Masha Pandra	.6 SOS Teacher – Middle School

Appointments:

Karen Poli	Secretary HS Student Office
Bethany Larsen	Teaching Assistant – Lane
Clare Hunt	Long Term Replacement ELL Teacher – Middle/Lane
Megan Salvucci	Long Term Replacement SOS Teacher – Middle

4. Presentation: FY’12 School Department Budget

Dr. LaCroix presented the FY’12 budget for the first time to the School Committee. She began by thanking her Administrative Team for their hard work, especially David Coelho, Director of Finance.

Dr. LaCroix presented a “maintenance of services” budget that reflects the financial constraints of the town. She noted that this was the sixth year in a row that the budget has been built on a lean base. She further explained that the last year’s cost centers were used once again. (Core Services, Utilities, Special Education Out-of-District Placements, Early Retirements, and the Transportation Contract)

Guidelines used by the Administrative Team to prepare the FY’12 budget include:

- Recognizing that contractual, legally mandated and economic sensitive costs continue to drive the increase in the budget request.
- Discretionary spending is limited to zero percent increase except for textbooks and extraordinary expenses.
- Out-of-district special education costs include only known costs.

Dr. LaCroix explained that the guiding principle used during the budget development was to reorganize services wherever possible in order to reduce staff and allow addition of new staff to meet critical needs. For example, the district will change the deployment of Teaching Assistants

to a more generalized assignment model. This will mean fewer one-on-one relationships and will be a culture change for many.

Dr. LaCroix also explained that the District will continue to institutionalize in-house Special Education Programs and that part of this effort includes moving funds away from the Federal grants to the operating budget. This will allow more effective use of Federal grant funds. Examples include .5 Behavioral Specialist, the 1.0 Occupational Therapist, and Teaching Assistants at Davis and Lane School.

Other desired changes in personnel include:

- At Lane, increase the Assistant Principal from a .5 position to a 1.0 position
- At Lane, increase the SPED Team Chair position to a 1.0 position, which is consistent with other schools.
- Add 1.0 ELL teaching position (the District will end up with 2 teachers)
- Add funding for Merrimack College Fellowship position. (Davis has been trialing this and it has been very successful)

Dr. LaCroix then reviewed enrollment projections. FY'12 is expected to see a small increase over FY'11 (1.22%). However, since FY'03, the enrollment has increased by 7.95%. Dr. LaCroix noted that not only has enrollment increased but the needs and demographics of the students have changed. Many students have ELL needs and many come to Bedford with significant learning issues. For example, the ELL enrollment has tripled since 2007. This year, there are 88 ELL students who speak 25 different languages.

Dr. LaCroix summarized the FY'12 Total Budget Request as follows:

FY'2012 Budget Request	\$33,608,820
FY'2011 Approved Budget	\$31,968,135
Variance	\$ 1,640,685
Percentage Change	5.13%

Dr. LaCroix noted that FY'12 Salaries are 71.61% of the total budget and non –salary items are 28.39%.

From a cost center perspective, the FY'12 budget breakdown is:

Regular Education	\$21,329,445
Special Education	\$ 9,765,797
Facilities	\$ 2,513,578

Dr. LaCroix presented detail information on the FY'12 budget drivers and details on the FY'12 Core Services. A number of items remained flat. However, the FY'12 ELL budget is new this year and somewhat significant (\$234,902)

Dr. LaCroix also presented the FY'12 Special Education request. In this request, the out-of-district budget is estimated to be \$6,065,761. She explained that this figure assumes an offset of \$588,000 from Circuit Breaker reimbursement. The risks of this assumption are based on the number of students and assumes that the state reimbursement rate will be 38% and that the State will not increase tuitions. Also, Dr. LaCroix explained that mobility (in and out of special education programs) is very unpredictable.

Dr. LaCroix said that the District has been diligently working to appropriately manage the number of out-of-district placements. The overall numbers are beginning to show that we are doing it correctly – creating programs in-house and saving money while families are happier to have their students remain in Bedford.

Dr. LaCroix summarized the number of in-house special education programs.

Program	# Students	Net Costs Avoided
Integrated PreK	6	\$97,265
Integrated K	4	\$157,286
Crossroads (Lane)	15	\$166,037
Crossroads (Middle)	7	\$174,145
Transitions (Lane)	5	\$204,492
Transitions (Middle)	5	\$121,982
Bridge Program (High)	5	\$110,982

The total cost avoidance is \$1,031,796.

Dr. LaCroix cautioned that the in-house programs are beginning to put a squeeze on space and that staff is also being stretched too.

Dr. LaCroix explained that FY'12 Transportation budget is flat because it is the third year of the contract. Also, the FY'12 facilities budget is down once again. This savings continues to allow the School department to carry out its responsibilities in a sustained, constrained fiscal environment. Dr. LaCroix noted that the total utilities budget has dropped by 35.5% since FY'05 thanks to closer rate monitoring and conservation measures.

Dr. LaCroix reviewed offsets for FY'12:

Building Rentals	\$116,500 (down by 24%)
Federal 94-142 Grant	\$161,660
Athletic Fund	\$44,250
Mudge Fund	\$8,000
ERATE Fund	\$25,000
Federal Edjobs	\$211,852
Circuit Breaker	\$588,865
State METCO	\$30,000
Total	\$1,186,127 which is a little bit more than last year.

Dr. LaCroix explained that the funds received for Hanscom students has not been applied to the FY'12 budget at this time. The School Department is working with Fiscal Planning on this issue.

Dr. LaCroix summarized the budget assumption risks:

- Are offsets sustainable?
- Special education out-of-district accounts are limited to current students only.
- There is no local control of out-of-district tuition costs.
- Unpredictable special education student movement
- No control over move-ins.

Dr. LaCroix described what is missing from the budget. For example:

- No funding for the fifth day of kindergarten.

- No additional administrative staff for Davis and Middle School. Currently Assistant Principals are .5 positions yet they have new responsibilities of RTI, 504 plans, Bullying Prevention.
- Have not migrated Excel Program to JGMS.
- Ratio of staff to hardware to meet changing demands of instructional technology.
- Adequate funding for professional development and summer studies.
- Ability to add positions to address class size issues related to cluster enrollment increases.
- Additional Technical Support.
- Funding for Mandarin.

Dr. LaCroix reminded the School Committee about some significant changes in our environment that affect the school department and budget. For example:

- Growing ELL population and required training and documentation translation services
- NCLB/MCAS testing.
- Crisis Prevention Training.
- Restraint Training.
- Data reporting requirements.
- Response to Intervention
- Individual Student Success Plans
- Bullying Prevention Plans
- Curriculum revisions as a response to the Common Core.

Dr. LaCroix also pointed out under-funded state grants such as Circuit Breaker, METCO and full day kindergarten.

Next steps include budget discussions at the December 7th and December 14th School Committee meetings and ongoing work with the Fiscal Planning Committee.

Dr. LaCroix ended the presentation with the following quote, “With implementation of RTI, increased needs of our special education population, and an increasing ELL population, we are stretching and straining our existing human resources.”

Mr. Pierce thanked Dr. LaCroix and her team. He said that it is unfortunate that the State is allowed to walk away from their obligation to fund 75% of the Circuit Breaker which would mean approximately \$526,000 to us.

Mr. Pierce asked Mr. Coelho to provide him with some additional information to analyze.

Examples include:

- FY’11 and FY’12 FTE comparisons.
- Revolving Funds Summary
- Substitute expenses
- List of grants
- Schedule of computer replacements
- Schedule of textbook replacements

Ms. O’Gara asked about the status of Federal grants. Ms. Taymore said that many have been reduced and many have expired. She pointed out that the amount of Federal grants are often tied to the number of Free and Reduced Lunches so Bedford tends to see a small share.

Ms. Bickford asked where the changes in Teaching Assistants would be. Dr. LaCroix and Ms. Taymore explained that it would be in all schools. The goal is to have Teaching Assistants be more generalized and not assigned to a specific teacher and student. Flexibility is needed. Ms. Bickford asked if students would miss the consistency. Dr. LaCroix said the goal is to keep it as consistent as possible but the flexibility of moving staff around based on need is essential. Ms. Taymore said that she sees this change as a more thoughtful approach to getting help to the students. She also noted that there has been a lot of training in the different areas of support given to the TAs and they have been very receptive to the training.

Ms. Bickford asked for the impact of NOT moving the Special Education positions into the operating budget. Dr. LaCroix agreed to get the information to the School Committee.

Ms. Bickford also asked MR. Coelho for information on why the building rentals are down.

Ms. Bickford and Ms. Seibert asked for more details on the computer replacement plans.

Ms. Bickford also asked when the collaborative budgets would be final. Dr. LaCroix said that it would occur in January and that she does not expect the actual numbers to increase from assumptions used in the budget request.

Ms. Bickford asked whether the School Committee should take a stand on using the Hanscom money (\$562,000). Mr. Pierce and Ms. Seibert said that there has been talk of the Town using it as a direct offset. Ms. Bickford suggests sorting this out at the next fiscal planning meeting.

Ms. Seibert asked for some additional information including supplies by school and the impact of needing more technical support.

Mr. Hafer said he would like to understand the implications of moving some of the Special education positions to the operating budget. He would also like more information on the salary increase. He also thinks any costs associated with the change in start time at the High School should be mentioned.

After further discussion, the School Committee agreed that Dr. LaCroix should prepare another budget request that has a zero percent increase. Ms. Bickford said it would make sense to develop a budget request that is \$1.6 million less. (The variance between FY'11 and the FY'12 Maintenance of Service Budget.)

Mr. Pierce said that revenue options (fees) should also be considered. Ms. O'Gara reminded Mr. Coelho to factor in usage reduction when doing a fee analysis.

5. Superintendent's Report

Dr. LaCroix that the process for applying to the Massachusetts School Building Authority has opened again. Dr. LaCroix is working on a statement of interest proposal for the Davis School. She would like to get it into the MSBA database for future consideration. She hopes to have this statement available for School Committee review on December 14th and then bring it to the Selectmen in early January. She explained that this project does not include the capital requests on space needs but it is the longer term need outlined in the Space Needs report.

6. Liaison Reports

Ms. O’Gara reminded everyone about the Bedford Education Foundation’s fundraiser at Barnes & Noble on Dec.9 and Dec. 10th.

Mr. Hafer reported that the Energy Task Force is now considering developing an energy plan for each building in the Town. He also noted that the Fields Partnership Committee has awarded the design of the turf field to a vendor and that a School Committee member will have the opportunity to be part of the design process.

7. Future Agenda

Budget

8. Adjournment

Ms Seibert made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 9:45.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford.

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Hafer	Yes
Ms. Seibert	Yes
Mr. Pierce	Yes
Ms. Bickford	Yes
Ms. O’Gara	Yes

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Nov. 30, 2010

Exhibits/Documents

- **Bedford Public Schools 2012 Operating Budget Request presentation.**

Bedford School Committee

Executive Session Minutes

Nov. 30, 2010