

NEW BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
BUDGET WORKING SESSION

PRESENT: MAYOR LANG, DR. FLETCHER, ATTY. CLARK, MS. POLLOCK,
MR. NOBREGA, DR. FINNERTY, MRS. USSACH

ABSENT: NONE

IN ATTENDANCE: DR. BONNER, DR. SOUZA, D. WINN, H. LARKIN, L. OLIVEIRA,
L. DUNAWAY (Acting recording secretary)

Dr. Bonner presented the Budget Assumptions to the Committee as follows:

- ❖ That the House I (Governor's budget) is the budget figure for Ch. 70 (\$112,708,032) 0.68% increase from FY'10.
- ❖ That "circuit breaker" (SPED relief) is funded at 40%
- ❖ That SPED tuition rates are 0.75% increase.
- ❖ That SPED transportation rates are level funded at 0% increase
- ❖ Administrative Cost Agreement (Net School Spending) is fully funded as agreed to by the School Committee and the Mayor. (Last year funded at 95.8% or a \$5.195 million cut from education funding.)
- ❖ American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will offset funding for local positions in order to maintain programs; funding one less position based upon salary increase.

Elimination of the Deputy Superintendent's position @ Paul Rodrigues Administration Building.

Dr. Bonner informed the Committee about the prospective new positions for the next school year:

1. One (1) Additional nurse for the Elementary Schools
2. One (1) SEI teacher at Roosevelt
3. Two (2) additional Physical Education Teachers for the Elementary Schools
4. One (1) additional Art teacher for the Elementary Schools
5. One (1) additional Music teacher for the Elementary Schools
6. One (1) Virtual High School coordinator (on line programs/independent study offered at the High School level)

Total salaries: \$387,926

Also, a plant engineer, a cook, a media specialist and an Assistant Principal will be needed for the new Lincoln School.

Ms. Pollock inquired about adding a second Drop-Out prevention specialist at the High School. Dr. Bonner replied that she and Mr. Oliveira would be looking into grant funding for these positions.

Mr. Nobrega asked about the possibility of closing the Dunbar School. Committee members asked how many students were enrolled. Dr. Bonner said that there were a little over 100 students enrolled at Dunbar. Mrs. Ussach inquired about the enrollment at the Kempton School to which Dr. Bonner replied that there was about 110 students at Kempton. Dr. Bonner said that \$400,000 could be saved if Dunbar School was closed. Students would then be transferred to either DeValles, Congdon or in the case of Out of District students, back to their neighborhood schools. In the case of the Kempton School, students would be transferred to Brooks School, Parker School or Pacheco School.

The Governor's version of revenues was distributed to the Committee. Increases or decreases in revenue were explained to the Committee by Mr. Oliveira using the Budget Assumptions outlined above. Expected revenues are \$113,741,742; expected expenses are \$118,069,631. This is a projected shortfall of \$4,327,889.

It was also mentioned that Net School Spending would be affected by an increase in Charter School expenses totaling \$1.6 million and a \$3 million rate increase in health care costs. Reimbursements from Acushnet are down due to lower enrollment.

Mr. Oliveira commented that he was hopeful that stabilization funds could be rolled over to the next fiscal year.

Mayor Lang inquired about the cost of Workers Compensation and unemployment benefits and asked for a three year history. Fuel costs for the new Lincoln School will also be looked into by Mr. Oliveira and submitted to the Committee at the next meeting.

Mr. Oliveira explained that the rise in salary and wages was due in part to many teachers' salaries going up in steps plus the 2% cost of living adjustment in the contract. A considerable number of teachers were hired several years over the past after a larger than usual group of teachers retired.

Mayor Lang suggested that the funding situation may be better than the state is indicating.

Dr. Bonner distributed the senate version of Chapter 70 funding. The figures showed that total revenues from all sources would be \$109,233,421; expected expenses are \$118,052,716. This is a projected shortfall of \$8,819,295. In the senate version, Chapter 70 funds are cut by 4% or \$4.6 Million

Mrs. Pollock suggested that transportation services be put out to a competitive bidding process.

At this time it was suggested that all members of the Committee attend the next Sub-Committee on Transportation meeting to be held on April 5, 2010 at 7:00 P.M.

Mayor Lang suggested that the budget could possibly be cut in the following manner: Charter School reimbursement, health care costs, stabilization funds, increase in Net School spending, transportation costs and re-negotiations with unions.

A discussion was held regarding upcoming budget session meeting dates. It was the consensus of the Committee that more information is needed from the state before they could make the necessary cuts to the budget.

VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, on a motion by Atty. Clark and seconded by Mrs. Ussach, to re-schedule the March, 25, 2010 meeting to April 5, 2010.

The Committee members also proposed that the Superintendent wait before adding the new positions and only close schools as a last resort.

Mayor Lang commented that this first budget session meeting was very helpful.

At 8:30 P.M., on a motion by Ms. Pollock and seconded by Mrs. Ussach, it was voted unanimously to recess the meeting until April 5, 2010 at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Portia S. Bonner, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Secretary, School Committee

PSB/lpd