



**DOVER SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

DOVER SCHOOL BOARD – MINUTES

Meeting Type: Budget Workshop
Meeting Location: Media Access Room (Rm 306) McConnell Center
Meeting Date: **Monday, February 3, 2014**
Meeting Time: **6:30 pm**

A workshop session of the Dover School Board was called to order by Chairperson Amanda Russell on Monday, February 3, 2014, at 6:40 p.m. in the media access room in the McConnell Center for the purpose of discussing the FY15 school district budget.

A. ROLL CALL: Members present were Amanda Russell, Betsey Andrews Parker, Sarah Greenshields, Doris Grady, Kathy Morrison, and Michelle Muffett-Lipinski. Carole Soule McCammon was excused.

Also present were Antonio Fernandes, Interim Superintendent; Karen Taylor, Business Administrator; Paula Glynn, CIA Director; Patrick Boodey, Principal WPS; Christine Boston, Pupil Personnel Services Director; Kimberly Lyndes, DMS Principal, Beth Dunton, Principal GES, Louise Paradis, CTC Director, Peter Wotton, Athletic Director, and *Foster's*.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Michelle Muffett-Lipinski led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. CITIZEN'S FORUM: No one addressed the Board.

D. BUDGET DISCUSSION: Antonio Fernandes presented information via PowerPoint (archived) on changes made to the budget since the last budget workshop. The agenda for the meeting included goals, budget drivers, the budget presentation and district accomplishments. Mr. Fernandes stated that he and the Business Administrator made changes in revenue from Barrington. They were not as conservative in the estimates and tried to be more realistic. He added that there may be more opportunity for additional increases in revenue. The increase in revenue is estimated to be 3.3%.

Mr. Fernandes continued to say that he has proposed a level service budget. This means that the programs and services remain the same. The only increase would be the cost of steps for teacher's wages and increase in medical costs. There will be a decrease in staff at DHS due to a change in the scheduling. An earth science position will be eliminated, but this is not budget related.

In the FY15 proposed budget, Mr. Fernandes stated that he is requesting a 1% increase or \$463,111 over the tax cap. This would be a total increase to the budget of 4.36%.

Ms. Taylor explained the changes in the level service budget. She noted that steps are included in wages for all labor unions, as well as a 7.5% increase in health insurance premiums. Purchasing services include attorneys, auditors, consultants, and other items including district contracts. Other objects include dues and fees and Other Uses of Funds include everything else.

Mr. Fernandes discussed the possible use of FY14 uncommitted funds and feels confident in requesting the use of \$118,067 for curriculum including science and visual and performing arts. He added that chrome books are embedded in the science technology fund request.



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He commented that he strongly supports technology and believes there should be a long term commitment to technology. He is proposing an investment of \$361,933 to technology from uncommitted funds. The total cost of curriculum and technology from FY14 uncommitted funds is approximately \$480,000.

Ms. Russell asked for more concrete figures on technology purchases. Ms. Taylor responded that there would be more accurate estimates within a short period of time. Different options are being reviewed and items purchased would go through the bid process.

Ms. Andrews Parker asked how much should be invested in technology at Dover High School if it will be renovated in the near future.

Mr. Fernandes agreed and responded that the entire district will be reviewed and they would most likely start the upgrades in the upper elementary and middle school grades where it will be most effectively used. There will be more information available later on this topic.

Ms. Andrews Parker asked if leasing or purchasing would be the best option for acquiring technology. Mr. Fernandes responded that the technology committee would discuss the options, but in the past, he has found leasing to be beneficial. Ms. Andrews Parker commented that she has a history with leasing equipment and when the lease period is over, has been able to purchase the equipment for a low price and auction to employees for revenue.

Ms. Taylor stated that both options will be explored so that all benefits will be considered. She added that much of the equipment should be mobile so that it can be used in new locations.

Ms. Muffett-Lipinski added that the District should be mindful of professional development. There needs to be a plan for use of this equipment.

Ms. Glynn assured the Board that there would be a plan for professional development.

Ms. Andrews Parker inquired about the purchase of technology and wants to be sure that the purchase of technology is tied to the technology plan. She added that she is supportive of the technology purchase, but wants to be mindful of the technology becoming obsolete.

Mr. Fernandes noted that this would be placed on the technology agenda. Ms. Paradis commented that they would most likely go with the chrome books as a "standard", but could use the laptops or ipads for classrooms, as needed.

Ms. Greenshields stated that she had heard that certain private schools are changing from chrome books to an alternative and she would be interested to find the reason.

Ms. Paradis added that a benefit of the chrome books is that the IT staff would not be managing them, and therefore additional staff isn't needed.



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Mr. Fernandes presented the priority staffing requests and provided justification for these requests. The top priority is an associate principal and guidance counselor at WPS. These will assure the compliance of Woodman Park School with the Department of Education.

Mr. Fernandes added that the placement of elementary teachers will be determined later in the spring after kindergarten and other enrollment is updated.

Ms. Boston explained the need for 6.5 additional Special Education Case Managers/Teachers. She stated that all of the schools have an increase in identified students and the numbers are still growing. She stated that there is a need for a reduced case manager to student ratio in all of the schools, with the exception of Garrison. The additional staff would bring the case load to 20:1, even though Ms. Boston feels that a ratio of 15:1 would be best. There was a gain of 18 students from last year and the trend for increases is continuing.

Ms. Boston stated that current ratios for the district range from 20:1 (Garrison) to 27:1 (WPS). She is concerned about the quality and quantity of interventions.

Staff has not been added in the past years, but is sometimes re-allocated where there is more need. Group sizes are increasing and this is not a best practice.

Mrs. Grady asked if any of the recommendations have been taken from the Brodsky special education study from 3 years ago. She stated that there has been a large increase in salaries in the past few years. Ms. Boston has reviewed the report and stated that staff has been reduced at the Alternative School. She added that 60-80 students have been added since that report.

Ms. Boston commented that the trend may be different than what the report thought that it would be. She added that her predecessor did follow some of the staff recommendations from the report.

Mrs. Grady commented that students who are in the middle seem to be neglected and maybe should be given some additional funding. The top and bottom students typically receive more resources. She would recommend reducing special education staff, as was recommended by the report, to which Ms. Boston disagreed stating that it would not be safe and place the District in a bad position.

Ms. Muffett-Lipinski asked if the increase in special education staff could ultimately reduce out of district placement costs in Dover. Ms. Boston responded that this could be a possibility, but behavioral issues may be the most difficult and require out of district placement. She added that within 12 months, the District may see a return of some students.

Ms. Muffett-Lipinski commented that a cost-benefit analysis may be helpful. Ms. Boston agreed that this may be helpful and will provide this.

The OASIS counselor and aide positions were also listed as top priorities and could also reduce the out of district placement costs for the District. This program was previously called the ISLAND



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program at DMS. It was more of a self-contained program and is now more of a drop-in program. There are approximately 25-30 students who participate in this program within the 4 grades at DMS.

Mrs. Grady asked if the guidance counselors would be able to assist in that program. Ms. Boston responded that this population needs more of a clinical social worker rather than a guidance counselor.

Ms. Andrews Parker asked if the clinical staff member would be able to provide reimbursement for health insurance. She also asked if there is a LDAC (licensed drug and alcohol counselor) at DMS and DHS. Ms. Boston responded that there is a LDAC at DHS who is grant funded and only works about 6 hours per week, which isn't adequate. She will look into the insurance reimbursement of the clinician.

Ms. Muffett-Lipinski was excused at 8:00 pm.

Mr. Fernandes reviewed the remaining top priorities.

When discussing enrollment, Ms. Russell commented that 27.5 students in each 3rd grade class at Horne Street School is unacceptable. She would have a difficult time supporting an increase of 2 teachers at DMS when the 3rd grade numbers at HSS and WPS are so high. She added that kindergarten numbers need to be monitored continually.

Ms. Russell commended the administrative team for their efforts and for allowing the Board members to determine what needs to be added, rather than eliminating positions.

Mrs. Grady stated that enrollment numbers will change continually from now until May. The addition of staff should wait until later in the season. She has seen from past years that on October 1, the number will be reduced from the August enrollment figures.

Ms. Russell believes that the enrollment numbers fluctuate but remain consistent.

Ms. Andrews Parker commented that she wants to move forward at each level and does not want to see fewer teachers than what we already have and asked if there is space in the schools for more classes.

Mr. Boodey stated that population trends need to be reviewed and this time of year the population tends to be the lowest, continuing to grow until October. Space in schools will difficult to find, but can be done. Horne Street School would have the most difficulty finding space.

Ms. Russell speculated that teachers would be happier without a staff room and smaller class sizes.



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Mr. Boodey stated that kindergarten projections make him nervous since there is no way of knowing what the enrollment will be. NESDEC projections have not been accurate or a good indicator this year. He recommended looking at trends and making a best guess on what could happen.

Ms. Russell commented that the District should prepare for the biggest population so that there isn't scrambling at the last minute.

Mrs. Grady added that the number of retirements needs to be factored in also, which could add money to the budget. This could also help to fund additional last minute teachers if needed.

Ms. Russell asked how the additional middle school teachers will affect the related arts schedule. Ms. Lyndes responded that there would be no changes since the 10th grade classes are divided into 12 groups already.

Mr. Fernandes also asked School Board members to keep priorities 2 and 3 in mind even if they are not able to be added for the next fiscal year.

Mrs. Grady asked if the override amount of \$795,000 is included in the budget. Ms. Taylor responded that it is included.

Mrs. Grady commented that she appreciates that the Board is not looking to make cuts and is discussing educational growth.

Mr. Fernandes commented that CIP requests should be a part of the next conversation. In addition, a Joint Building Committee for DHS will need to be discussed at the next Board meeting.

Ms. Greenshields asked if the budget included contributions to reserve funds. Mr. Fernandes stated that it did not.

Ms. Andrews Parker asked if they would be given a schedule of for capital reserve funds at the next meeting, to which Mr. Fernandes responded that they would.

Ms. Russell stated that the Board needs to discuss what type of budget they want to present to the Council. It needs to be determined if they will present a figure over the tax cap or if some items will need to be eliminated.

She is concerned that the District is not budgeting for curriculum and technology and would also like a schedule for the budgeting of them in capital reserves. She feels it is a step in the right direction.

E. ADJOURNMENT: Betsey Andrews Parker moved, Sarah Greenshields, to adjourn at 8:37 p.m. An oral **VOTE PASSED 5/0.**



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Respectfully submitted,

KATHLEEN MORRISON, Secretary
Dover School Board

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