

Present: Dorianne Almann, Bruce Bellville, Joe Conroy, Morris Klein, Lewis Major, James MacDonell, Selectmen's Rep Wayne Gallagher, and Peter Zavorotny. Excused: Michael Carrier.

Mr. Zavorotny called the joint meeting with the school board to order at 6:30pm; School Board Rep Tina McCosker sat with the school.

Mr. Zavorotny began the meeting by asking if any committee members had preliminary comments. He told the committee that he had received data from the school about a week ago and had forwarded it.

Mr. Zavorotny began by asking whether it was additional personnel or an increase in salaries that accounted for the increase in **Special Service Admin Salaries 100.2320.51100.20** (page 4). It was an increase in salaries due to the fact a person picked up additional responsibilities.

In terms of **Repairs & Maintenance 100.2600.54300.20** (page 5), what accounted for the 95% increase?

Thomas O'Connor, Business Administrator, replied to Mr. Zavorotny's question. "It's really balancing the account. There's no magic which line gets charged. Less was charged to Building & Grounds, more to Maintenance." Mr. Conroy asked if they shouldn't be two accounts. They are, Mr. O'Connor responded. The contract with Johnson Controls goes into Building & Grounds. This way, an established record gets developed that can be seen. The \$30,000 for the boiler, for instance, is reflected in Building & Grounds.

In terms of **Salaries Technology 100.2840.51100.20** (page 6), Mr. Zavorotny said he assumed the cost is due to a new person.

Yes, this was the case.

A Tech Support Specialist was hired. The person goes into the field, repairing computers and printers, and does not sit at a desk.

Mr. MacDonell wondered if the salary was high enough. The position is full-time (12 month); the salary is almost \$17/hour.

The position is entry-level, Director of Technology, Deborah Child Trabucco explained. The expectation is that it would appeal to a recent college grad. The salary, the budget committee learned, is in the range but on the low side, based on a salary analysis.

Mr. Zavorotny asked is the increase in **Copier Lease/Maint. 100.2840.54420.20** (page 6) is due to an increase in lease or maintenance?

Mr. O'Connor replied the increase was due to adding another copier on the second floor. Teachers were having trouble getting to the copier on the first floor.

IT Equipment 100.2840.57340.20 (page 7) is \$25,000 over last year's budget and Mr. Zavorotny wanted to know why.

Mr. O'Connor replied that the school "had been under budgeting." The school is moving to a five year replacement cycle in terms of technology. Mr. Zavorotny asked how many computers there are in the district. Ms. Child Trabucco spoke up. There are 318 computers in the district. Each year, 30 are replaced and the goal is to increase that to 60. (A note dated 2007 was recently found stating that the goal was to move to a five year cycle of replacing computers.) One-third of the computers in the district are Windows XP. Mr. O'Connor remarked that the school is "constrained by how much of the technology can be upgraded."

Mr. MacDonell spoke up, saying he'd gotten "Dell to do some amazing things" and that he would talk to the school to see what opportunities could be found.

Mr. Zavorotny asked about the abbreviations in **100.11**. It's Para Professional and the amount increased by 72%.

This was due, Mr. O'Connor explained, to restrictions at the elementary school level. Two first grade classes were combined and the number of students required that another person be hired.

Mr. Zavorotny said he knows there's an issue with the fire escape. On page 9 (**100.1200.52110.21 Health Insurance SPED**), Mr. Zavorotny observed costs are up.

Mr. O'Connor replied this is due to the cost of the plan—"a \$200,000 nut." While there was an 11% increase, based on claims, the school increased its costs by 10%; we "made a 1% adjustment, so we saved a bit of money."

May/June sees Open Enrollment in terms of health plans, the Budget Committee learned. Someone may've had a baby; someone retires and is replaced by a new hire who has a family. These are among the factors that affect costs.

Mr. MacDonell questioned as to when the real rate will be learned. Mid to the end of May, Mr. O'Connor replied. The actuaries do the analysis to determine what the claims are anticipated to be. He went on to say that the guaranteed rates for the last few years have been 2% or 3%.

Mr. Zavorotny raised questions about Health **Insurance Guidance 100.2120.52110.21** (page 10) and **Supplies Language Arts Middle 100.1105.56100.22** (page 12). The latter was up due to a theater requirement by the state.

Health Insurance SPED 100.1200.52110.22 (page 15) and **Para Salary SPED 100.1200.51150.22** (page 15) are up; is this due to an additional person?

Yes, replied Principal Ann Freitag. Administrators are examining the issue of paras--looking at how paras are being trained and how many are needed, for instance.

The Social/Emotional Curriculum is part of Second Step Curriculum that's driven by state requirements. The district is phasing it in.

Mr. Zavorotny had questions on **Admin Salaries Middle/High 1010.2400.51100.22** (page 18).

Mr. O'Connor explained the increase is due to expansion of Extended Learning Opportunity (ELO). The program "has grown so much" the program needs a dedicated person. Currently, 37 students are part of ELO with some students doing multiple ELO's. School personnel see ELO replacing the Career Center. The Center is not open at convenient hours. ELO students are working at the Winchester Town Hall and in a riding stable in Bernardston. ELO students were placed with a blacksmith, in a veterinarian's office, at a hair dresser. A significant amount of background checking must be done prior to student placement—"the kids aren't placed with anyone." ELO offers expanded opportunities for high school students who may not necessarily be college bound. Holly Kennedy commented that "keeping high schoolers in school can be a challenge." ELO is valuable because students taking part need to demonstrate real world competencies.

Mr. Zavorotny asked is **Printing & Binding 100.2400.55500.22** (page 18) was for repairing books. Yes, Executive Assistant Ann Marie Diorio replied; Erica sends out lots of books for rebinding.

With questions from the Budget Committee at an end, Mr. Zavorotny asked if the committee wanted to take action. Committee members were not inclined to do so.

Mr. MacDonell asked, "Can we talk about the elephant in the room? The fire escape."

Mr. Taft replied that "enrollment is a driving factor. Looking out five years space is the issue." This is due to the fact that kindergartners and first graders can only, by law, be put on the first floor. Administrators must try to figure out how many students are anticipated and what needs to be on the first floor.

Related to this is what teachers believe about teaching and learning because these factors drive classroom configuration. How can classrooms be configured affordably? Enrollment for kindergarten, for instance, turned out to be 48; planning had been done for fewer (45).

Mr. O'Connor noted that first graders can be allowed on a second floor if they have a dedicated egress.

Mr. MacDonell was disappointed in the responses, saying the fire escape has been an issue for three years. He had "hoped to hear something that was more ramped up."

Do we have a short term fix, Mr. O'Connor asked, the have to come back to the town? The first grade class is pushing 50 students, Mr. MacDonell observed. "There's a problem; what do we do with the kids in September?" Mr. O'Connor replied that discussions currently being held in terms of the fire escape are important.

Mr. Conroy asked if portable units are viable.

Mr. Taft replied that in terms of the youngest students, they don't really help. Water and sanitary facilities are needed and if students need to depend on the school building for them, they'd have to be escorted from the portable unit to the school and be buzzed in.

Ms. McCosker asked if the preschoolers could be put into the high school.

Mr. Taft replied this option is being considered, wondering if one room is enough to accommodate the preschoolers should they move in the high school building.

The school committee departed at 7:17pm.

The Budget Committee discussed the public meeting; Mr. MacDonell made a motion to set its date as Wednesday, February 3. Mr. Bellville provided the second and the motion carried. Mr. Zavorotny said it needs to be determined who goes first—the town or the school. He reminded the committee he would be out of town by then.

Mr. Zavorotny informed the committee that Emergency Management is looking at purchasing three road signs costing \$8,000 apiece. Mr. Klein observed that Brattleboro has one such sign. Given the committee's feeling that the signs are excessive, Mr. Zavorotny said he would talk to the selectmen about the matter.

Mr. Zavorotny asked Mr. MacDonell if he knew the situation with articles. Mr. MacDonell replied articles haven't been discussed; this is expected to happen at a meeting on January 27. Mr. Zavorotny noted a new labor agreement from the school is close to being finalized. The school budget is up 2.3%.

Discussion took place as to the message Ms. McCosker was to relay to the school committee. Ms. Almann remarked that her company had ended dental insurance and cut vacation time. People who had five weeks' vacation saw their vacation reduced to two weeks paid vacation; if they wished to take more time off than that, it would be unpaid. C&S ended contributions to 401-K's.

Ms. McCosker will inform the school committee that the Budget Committee is looking for the school budget to be flat.

The Budget Committee is planning on meeting January 20.

With no more business to discuss, Mr. MacDonell made a motion to adjourn. He was seconded by Mr. Bellville. The meeting ended at 7:32pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorianne Almann
Secretary