



BUTLER PTA General Meeting March 16, 2015, 6:00 pm
Minutes taken by Stephanie Wratten, Recording Secretary

Attending: Barbara Bulfoni, Yvette Leeson, Eric Perkins, Maria Hettenbach, Parveen Duncan, Kate Abruzzi, Patrick Phillips, Alexandra Goho, Molly Arnason, Sterling Crockett, Miriam Lapson, Anita Tang, Chao Tu, Bill Like, Eliza Wu, Jeff Duncan, Julie Crockett, Ann Ozawa, Jian Jian Wang, Yingjie Sun, Adam O'Neil, Cheng Zhong, Teresa Soccio, Stephanie Wratten, Michael McAllister

Presentation by Superintendent Phalen

His PowerPoint is online – please refer to it for detailed information about the budgets.

<http://www.belmont.k12.ma.us/bps/Portals/0/docs/budget/2016/school%20comm%20fy16%20budgetpresentation%20REV%202015-02-25.pdf>

Below is some additional explanation from the meeting.

The PowerPoint presents 2 potential budget scenarios for the Belmont schools – the financial task force budget and the available revenue budget. The financial task force budget was developed over the past year by a group of community members to try to figure out how much we need as a town vs. what is our revenue. They did some homework – looked backward at expenses and projected needs forward. That committee decided that as a town we need about \$7 million more, but felt it was reasonable to ask for 4.5 million in an override. This override money would be used for all town needs, not just the schools.

In terms of the general town budget, about 58% of the budget is for the schools.

A note about the enrollment numbers – each year represents NET new students, so it already accounts for students who leave the district each year. Based on projections, there is a 10-year period there will be about 725 new students entering the district – that's the equivalent of adding about 2 Butler schools.

We have a very large kindergarten class this year and they will head to 1st grade next year – a critical year for reading so it will be important to address class size.

There are three main areas where we are required to pay certain amounts by the state. They are listed in the PowerPoint, but are related to out of district special needs students, ELL (English language learning) students, and transportation.

The financial task force budget will provide money to pay for these necessary costs and allow for additional teachers (10 in year one, another 5 in year two, and another 5 in year three) to manage the additional enrollment.

A question was asked about the lack of substitute teachers at the high school and if Dr. Phelan knew of other districts doing that. He said he had not experienced that before. However, unfortunately, the financial task force budget does not allocate funds for subs at the high school. However, some of the new teachers are designated for the high school in order for students to be able to take more classes and have fewer free periods.

The PowerPoint details the cuts that would need to be made if the available revenue budget is the option. Teachers whose jobs are identifiable on the list have already been informed by their principals that their job will be reduced or eliminated. The money cut was distributed to the different levels (elementary, middle, high) according to the # of students at each level. The decisions about how to distribute the needed cuts at the elementary level were made the principals and they attempted to have similar services available at each school.

Regarding the all day kindergarten fee, the district is waiting on the Governor's budget which may cut state funds for all day kindergarten and necessitate raising that fee more than planned.

The final slide in the PowerPoint details some of the impact of the cuts that would be necessary with available revenue budget and how many students would be impacted by each reduction. Some current high school students have their course sign-ups on hold right now while they wait to find out if certain courses will be taught next year.

A question was asked about how the override works. Because proposition 2 ½ only allows the town to raise property taxes by 2.5% each year, an override can be needed when costs outpace that rate. Many towns comparable to Belmont are doing overrides every 3-4 years to manage increased costs. For this override, there would be an additional 4.5 million gathered in taxes each year; about 2.8 million of that would be used for the schools and the rest for other town needs.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm.