

RICHMOND SCHOOL PUBLIC HEARING ON THE BUDGET

Tuesday May 10, 2022 - Via Zoom - 6:00 PM

PRESENT: Adline Ellis, Chair; Ina Wilhelm; Kimmie Leeco; Dan Weston, Principal; Peter Dillon, Superintendent; Mary Shook, Special Ed. Director;

Peter opened the hearing with a review of the budget.

The total amount to be approved, less the Choice money, Grants and Expenditures, comes to \$4,220,871.00.

School Committee Expenses increase from \$3,500 to \$6,000, which will allow attendance at the Mass. School Cte. Conference and some other associated expenses.

Superintendent - Mostly flat: membership in the Superintendent's organization is \$750. In MARS, \$250 and Administrative expenses are \$1,250.

Special Education - Increases represent the budgeted vs paid Director's salary. Special Ed Paraprofessionals decreased; Professional Services fees increased \$2,000

Principal - Printing and Copying increased, Pupil Supplies increased by \$1,000; Special Ed decreased by \$2,000 and Text Books increased by \$1,725.

Teachers' Salaries - Paraprofessionals increased by an addition of \$5,000 for Cultural Enrichment; Professional Development decreased; Technology Expenses decreased; Hardware increased and the nurse's salary increased.

Transportation - Increased but Special Education Transportation decreased by \$40,000.

Tuitions at other schools - Lee decreased; Lenox increased; Mt. Everett increased; Taconic decreased by \$36,800 and Special Placements decreased by \$175,000.

Food Services Salaries increased; Custodial Salaries increased; Utility costs increased.

Medical Insurance has remained flat

Unemployment Insurance has also remained flat

Adeline asked why the huge decrease in tuition for Taconic. Peter explained that it was a matter of tracking students graduating out of high school.

In response to a question about teacher's salaries, Peter noted that the budget shows \$116,201. held in Contingency for bargaining on teachers' salaries and that some

employees are not represented by a bargaining unit. Increases for all of those will come out of the \$116,201.

Peter reported that he had worked closely with the Budget Advisory Committee who looked very critically at the budget and made recommendations for reducing costs. One of the changes made was an extra half time Custodian that will not be budgeted for this year. Peter will send a copy of the spreadsheet to the members of the Committee. He remarked that he feels comfortable submitting this budget to the Town Meeting for a vote.

Adeline moved to approve the budget of \$4,220,871. As proposed. She was seconded by Kimmie and the motion passed by unanimous roll-call vote: Adeline, aye; Kimmie, aye.

At this point, Adeline moved to adjourn the Public Hearing on the School Budget. She was seconded by Kimmie and the motion passed by unanimous roll-call vote: Adeline, aye; Kimmie, aye.

Adeline then called the Regular Meeting of the Richmond School Committee to order at 6:18 PM:

Public Comment: None

Principal's Report: Dan reported that the school is in the process of reopening fully in the wake of a county-wide COVID resurgence. The staff is, therefore, taking all possible steps to keep the students, teachers and staff safe. Tables have been placed outside for lunch.

The school is now in the homestretch for MCAS testing and teachers and staff are working hard to make sure all necessary testing accommodations are being met.

The Drumming residency has begun and field trips are planned after a long two-year hiatus. Those plans will, of course, be subject to the incidence of COVID cases in the area.

Mothers' Day Tea was held recently to great acclaim. Teachers are in the process of wrapping things up and the Third Grade Video Project is underway. It has been a good, busy time.

Kimmie asked whether all MCAS testing takes place for all grades at the same time. Dan explained that one or two grades are scheduled in a day. Some make-up sessions will increase that number. He noted that the students are working very hard.

Superintendent's Report: Peter addressed the issue of Pre-School Pricing. In past years that cost was \$45/day for a non-resident student. He proposed to increase that to \$50/day for non-residents and \$25/day for Richmond students, which he felt was a reasonable and competitive price. For those families needing to enroll more than one child (twins, siblings very close in age) the cost will be discounted to \$40/day for each child not a Richmond resident and the usual 50% reduction for Richmond residents. Adeline moved to accept the changes to the Preschool Pricing as indicated above. She was seconded by Kimmie and the motion passed by unanimous roll-call vote: Adeline, aye; Kimmie, aye.

Special Education Director's Report: Mary Shook reported that the school is in the process of winding down. She was pleased to report that she had attended an in-person meeting with a parent and specialist last week for the first time in a long time.

Mary attended the State's Circuit Breaker Training and found it very helpful.

Dan and Mary met and started scheduling for next year. Basically, all is going well.

Policy Review:

Peter began the second reading of Aab - the recommended Harassment Policy: Kimmie requested inclusion in the definition of Sexual Harassment the phrase "sexual harassment does not necessarily need to be sexual in nature." There was a long discussion that resulted in Peter asking Kimmie to provide him with the exact wording and placement for that inclusion. He would then contact the school's counsel and bring her response back to the next meeting.

Policy Ac - Peter noted that this was fine as written and needed no changes. Adeline moved to approve the policy as written. Kimmie seconded her and the motion passed by unanimous roll-call vote: Adeline, aye; Kimmie, aye.

Policy Fa - Facilities - General. Deals with the retirement of facilities, an issue for districts with multiple schools. Peter suggested that they just drop it. The Naming Policy that indicates a preference for creating scholarships for memorials instead of naming buildings or parts of buildings was consistent with the Committee's philosophy and was kept.

Financial Report: Peter noted that there are still a few categories showing negative balances. In June, all will be corrected by the reallocation of funds and dollar amounts remaining will reduce as the year winds down.

Adelaine questioned the paralegal's salaries. Peter explained that the numbers are a little higher than projected, but will be offset by another SPED Paraprofessional's salary.

Regionalization: Peter explained the workings of the Eight Town Regional School District Planning Board. They recently voted to look deeper into their consultant's proposal to merge two of the districts; leave the elementary and middle schools as they are but combine the High School into one on the Monument Mt. campus. The group will write a new Agreement that will discuss governance structure, a formula for allocation of expenses between the towns, a capitalization formula and transportation.

This is an ongoing process but it is anticipated that a vote will be taken by the 8 towns in 6-7 months. Peter acknowledged that the reason the Committee included this issue on the agenda was to determine what impact any regionalization would have on his time. He suggested that it would be of benefit to have a meeting of the Richmond School Committee and a subset of the Berkshire Hills Committee to discuss that issue.

Questions about the proposed merger included what the roles of the principals, facility personnel, etc. will look like; what is the overall educational vision and how will staffing be done. Peter noted that at this time it is impossible to guess even what the outcome of an 8 town vote would be.

Unforeseen Items: Kimmie asked about the Principal's Survey. Peter reported that the staff has been working on that for the past two weeks and he has received 16 responses so far. He will send out a reminder to staff and hope for additional returns.

Teachers' Appreciation Week was held last week and was very well done. The families of the Richmond students created wonderful food and drinks and showed their appreciation for the teachers and staff.

Peter noted that there are several warrants that need to be signed by the Committee. Dan said that he has created a space in his office where the committee members can drop by at their convenience to sign the warrants.

There being no further business before the Committee, Adeline moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:08 PM. She was seconded by Kimmie and the motion was adopted by unanimous roll-call vote: Adeline, aye; Kimmie, aye.

Submitted by Phyllis LeBeau