

## **BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES OF**

**December 8, 2009**

### **1. Call to Order**

At 7:30 p.m., Mr. Pierce called to order, the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Ms. Bickford, Ms. Seibert, Ms. O’Gara and Mr. Hafer. Ms. Anne Dickinson Meltz, student representative, was also present.

### **2. Comments**

Ron Richter and Stacy Shalick, members of the Turf Committee, addressed the School Committee. A Committee member stated that \$37,500 has been raised and the money has been given to the Town. The next step is for the DPW to issue a bid for turf field design. Also, a communications subcommittee will be established in order to keep all town boards in the loop and up-to-date. The plan is to copy the School Committee with the design and the School Committee will be given ample opportunity to comment. It is hoped that ultimately this project will go to Town Meeting for a vote.

### **3. Personnel Report**

Dr. LaCroix asked the School Committee to vote on the Skills Center Teacher job description that was discussed at an earlier School Committee meeting.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

**MOVED: That the School Committee approve the job description for the Skills Center Teacher at the Middle School as amended.**

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

Dr. LaCroix also announced the resignation of John Espejo, a fourth grade teacher from Lane School and the appointment of Bryan Tonini as a .9 teaching assistant at Lane School.

### **4. Presentation: NESDEC Enrollment Study**

Mr. Don Kennedy presented the enrollment study he completed for Bedford Public Schools. Mr. Kennedy explained that he was with the NESDEC, a nonprofit group with extensive experience doing enrollment and demographic studies.

He explained the result of the study done for Bedford:

- Current enrollment is 2400 and this number is projected to grow to 2480 in 2019-2020 (10 years) representing a flat growth curve.

According to Mr. Kennedy, the schools are seeing high enrollments right now but overall this will be expected to decline and flatten out by the 2019-2020 school year. Unfortunately, there will be several pressure points at several of our schools during this ten year period. For example, Davis will see high enrollment during the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years. Lane will flatten out in a couple of years but will bulge again beginning in 2015.

Mr. Kennedy said that the current increase in enrollment is due to a building permit growth spurt during the years of 2005-2007. This building boom occurred to meet affordable housing requirements plus the normal rate of new buildings. As a result, Bedford has 18% of its housing as "affordable" which is well above the state requirements. He stated, "The Town's decision to add affordable housing really is the root cause of enrollment spikes."

Mr. Kennedy also discovered that the people who moved into these affordable housing residences tended to be families with children in grades 3-8. Many of these families are new to Bedford. Some were in-town families who were downsizing. These people typically sold their homes to families with children.

Mr. Kennedy noted that a small amount of Bedford students go to private schools. He said, "People move into town to stay in the public schools." Bedford has a higher than state average in percent of public school students per dwelling. People see the community as a really good value for their money.

Mr. Kennedy also noted that Hanscom has the same minimal affect on the K-8 enrollment over time and that Hanscom students will continue to be approximately 20% of the High School population during the next ten years.

Mr. Kennedy also noted that typically, the public kindergarten class is 113% of the birth rate five years previous except for this year and next year where it will be bigger.

Ms. O'Gara asked what Mr. Kennedy learned about potential housing stocks in the works. Mr. Kennedy said he learned about a 75 unit project on Hartwell Road and the Habit for Humanity project on North Road. He did not know anything about the Princeton Properties plan.

Ms. Bickford thanked Mr. Kennedy for a thorough report. She said she is concerned about JGMS space issues for the 2019-2020 school year. She does not know how there will be room for 619 students and she does not know how this large class will be handled at the high school in following years. Mr. Kennedy said that this was too far into the future and he encourages districts to continue with projections every year.

Ms. Bickford noted that Bedford's growth rate has been around 2% for several years. She asked if this was typical for other Massachusetts towns. Mr. Kennedy said no, that Bedford is not typical. Our suburban pattern is similar to Concord, Wayland, etc. but we differ because we have small numbers of students in private schools.

Mr. Hafer asked what happens if the large Kindergarten classes continues beyond the next 2 years. Will the report be underprojected? Mr. Kennedy said it would be important to watch what happens on the census and to incorporate these changes into the forecast. He also suggested monitoring the number of building permits issued and to note that move-ins typically occur 2 years after issuance.

Mr. Hafer asked if there was a margin of error on the report. Mr. Kennedy said yes, 1% for each year going out. (1% for the next year and 10% for the year 2019-2020.)

Mr. Pierce said it was interesting to hear that Bedford's decision to build affordable housing directly affected the school enrollment spike.

Mr. Pierce asked Mr. Kennedy whether he would give Mr. Coelho the model to continue projections every year? Mr. Kennedy said that he would work with Mr. Coelho to help him move forward with projections.

## **5. FY'11 Budget Discussion**

Dr. LaCroix said that last Tuesday, she presented the Administration's budget request for FY'11. Since then, the Finance Committee and the Fiscal Planning Committee has asked the School Committee to present a level funded budget. Therefore, she called the Administrative team together to see what a zero percent budget would like.

Dr. LaCroix presented this budget scenario to the School Committee. She did note before the start of the presentation that the Finance Committee is still working with financial models and has not yet arrived at a budget goal.

Dr. LaCroix reviewed the FY'11 budget presented last week:  
FY 2011 total budget request is \$32,781,189, which is 5.4% increase from FY 2010. She noted that the Program Administrators were limited to a zero percent increase for FY'11 and that they same cost center structures are being used. She said that any available offsets would be used. She also noted that state revenues are expected to be very low.

Dr. LaCroix noted that this year, the increase in special education is smaller than the past and is in line with regular education. She also thankfully noted that utilities is at a remarkable low – only a .9% increase.

### Level Budget Presentation

According to Dr. LaCroix, in order to get to a level budget (no increase from FY'10), there must be a reduction of \$1,700,000 from the "Maintenance of Services" budget presented on December 1, 2009. To reach this goal, the Administrative Team decided on the following principles:

- Focus on the needs of children
- Meet needs of all children – typical, special education, gifted, and ELL
- Continue to move the schools forward
- Reductions cannot be equal among the schools
- Recognize that this is a multiyear problem so we need a long range solution
- We are obliged to work with the town to address the larger fiscal problem
- Maintain effective programs
- Maintain comprehensive, continuous programming for K-12 education
- Maintain support services especially given impacts of increasing class size
- Class size
  - Under 21 for K
  - Under 22 for 1 & 2
  - Under 25 for Lane
  - Under 25 for JGMS

The Team proposed the following reductions to meet a level funded budget:

- Cut School Resource Officers

- Cut Director of Curriculum
- Reduce Teacher ERI/Sick Leave buy back
- Reduce Supplies and travel
- Reduce 1.0 maintenance position
- Cut 4 lead custodian stipends
- Eliminate summer student custodians
- Eliminate the window washing contract
- Eliminate 1 kindergarten teacher and educational assistant
- Eliminate 1 grade 2 teacher
- Eliminate three educational assistants at Davis
- Reduce equipment and supplies and training budget
- Eliminate the assistant principal position
- Eliminate one foreign language teacher (and thus offer foreign language in 5<sup>th</sup> grade only)
- Eliminate three education assistant positions
- Eliminate the Computer Lab aide
- Eliminate 3 grade level stipends
- Eliminate summer curriculum work and supplies
- Eliminate a .2 music teacher at JGMS
- Reduce Gifted teacher to a .4 at JGMS
- Reduce a .4 adjustment counselor at JGMS
- Eliminate a 1.0 sped teacher, reading teacher and Library EA at JGMS
- Eliminate the intramural stipend at JGMS
- Eliminate Guidance summer days
- Cut 4 teaching .4 positions at the high school (will end up eliminating 30 offerings which will increase class size)
- Eliminate the Freshman Football Assistant coach position
- Eliminate 2 aids (library and computer lab) at the High School

Dr. LaCroix also proposed making several cuts in special education, many of which are budgeted due to past patterns of need. She also described cuts in the computer replacement schedule.

Dr. LaCroix explained that the next step is to continue to work with the town's Fiscal Planning Committee to determine what revenue is available.

She noted that the Finance Committee is still determining the final budget guideline and when it is issued, she will develop another budget recommendation. In the mean time, she will prioritize the above mentioned reductions to help with restorations once the final guideline is known.

Dr. LaCroix repeated the challenge: "Maintain the quality of the programs that this community expects as we move through this fiscal crisis."

Ms. Bickford emphasized that this is just a beginning of a process and things could get better or worse. She thanked everyone for their hard work in presenting this scenario. She acknowledged that it is now the School Committee's responsibility to understand the implications of these proposed reductions.

Ms. Bickford suggested maybe categorizing the reductions to help make decisions. For example, she said there may be some cuts that everyone is comfortable with making where others will require a lot of analysis to move forward. She also said it is important to understand the risks associated with the proposed cuts. Ms. Bickford also noted that many of these proposals will require additional information. For example, cuts in the high school may affect different departments very differently.

Ms. Bickford also asked Mr. Coelho to bring forward information on instituting fees.

Ms. O'Gara said she is very worried about maintenance cuts and reductions in PC replacements. She fears we may never catch up. She feels Bedford's core mission is being chipped away. She also fears that as there is less support in the schools, behavioral issues will rise simply because there are not enough people in the buildings.

Ms. Seibert said that there was a lot to take in tonight. She agrees with Ms. Bickford that there are some low risk items that may be cut but all in all, the School Committee needs to fully understand the implications of many of these cuts.

Mr. Hafer agrees that fees need to be discussed again. He also warned about cuts in personnel will set into motion collective bargaining issues.

Mr. Pierce thanked Dr. LaCroix for a thoughtful approach to this fiscal crisis.

Ms. Bickford suggested considering having parents come to a meeting to learn about these possible reductions and the impacts it will have once the guideline is known.

Dr. LaCroix suggested that the School Committee not meet next week since the Finance Committee will not have a guideline issued by then and no other financial information will be available to move the budget discussion forward.

A parent in the audience spoke. She has a son with special education needs at Lane School. She said that this is his first year back in Bedford Schools as he spent the last 6 years in an out-of-district placement. He is having a great year with lots of support and she does not want these budget decisions to change this fact. She wants her son to stay in Bedford Schools until he graduates.

## **6. Superintendent Reports**

Dr. LaCroix reported on the recent reading rally at Davis School where Wally the Green Monster from the Red Sox visited the students and promoted reading.

Also, Boston Channel 4 will be doing a feature story at Lane School on how education has changed and why it is so expensive. They visited several classrooms. Dr. LaCroix will let everyone know when it airs.

Dr. LaCroix wished everyone a happy holiday.

## **7. Liaison Reports**

Charter Review will have an Open Public Meeting. Date to be announced.

CEC – rankings were discussed and will announce priorities next week.

Bedford Education Foundation will have a big fundraiser at Barnes and Noble on 12/14 and 12/15.

#### **8. Future Agenda**

The next meeting will be January 6th at 7:30 a.m.

#### **9. Adjournment**

Ms O'Gara made the following motion:

**MOVED:** Motion to adjourn at 10:20 p.m..

**MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Bickford**

**MOTION APPROVED: 5-0**

##### **Roll Call Vote:**

<b>Mr. Pierce</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Ms. Seibert</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Mr. Hafer</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Ms. Bickford</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Ms. O'Gara</b>	<b>Yes</b>

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School Committee Secretary

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Date

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**EXECUTIVE SEESION  
MINUTES OF**

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