

**BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF**

January 12, 2010

1. Call to Order

At 9:05 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 From Public

Ms. Irene Gravina, secretary of the Special Education Parents Advisory Committee, said she is very concerned about the budget and Special Education funding from the state.

3. Presentation: 2010-2011 School Calendar

Dr. LaCroix presented the proposed 2010-2011 school calendar to the School Committee. The calendar’s format has not changed too much from this year’s. For example:

- Students will start on the day after Labor Day – September 7, 2010
- Staff will return on August 31, 2010
- June 9, 2011 is graduation
- June 17, 2011 will be the last school day (assuming no snow days)
- Teachers have the same number of professional days as previous years

Dr. LaCroix did explain a change with conferencing days at Lane. In the past, substitutes have been hired for one full day to cover teacher conferences. Teachers have asked that this practice be changed because it is too disruptive. At Lane School, Mr. Ackerman has proposed holding conferences on the November 17th, Dec. 21st and Dec. 15th half days. They also have proposed using April 13th, April 27th and May 11th for spring conferences.

Dr. LaCroix said a lot of work and thought has gone into this change and the change has been discussed with BEST and the Teacher Association, both are supportive.

Davis School is still working on their recommendation.

Ms. Bickford asked if we ended up with more early release days. Dr. LaCroix said no but they do fall in different clusters.

Ms. Bickford asked if professional development will suffer as a result. Dr. LaCroix said that there is never enough time for professional development but this change seems reasonable to try.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the 2010-2011 School Calendar as presented tonight (January 12, 2010)

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O’Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Dr. LaCroix promised to bring forward the Davis School conference recommendation shortly.

4. FY'11 Budget Discussion

Dr. LaCroix reviewed the budget process and recommendations.

On December 1, 2009, she presented a "Maintenance of Services" budget request of \$32,781,189. This budget included the same services as FY2010 and same commitment to negotiated contractual agreements. It is a 5.4% increase from the FY2010 budget.

On December 8, 2009, Dr. LaCroix presented a "level funded" budget (zero percent increase from FY2010). This budget request was \$30,102,142. This budget would require a \$1,679,047 reduction from the "Maintenance of Services" budget. Dr. LaCroix proposed meeting this reduction as follows:

SPED ODD	\$250,000
SPED Indistrict	\$84,610
Utilities	\$54,000
Professional Salaries	\$827,186
Classroom ParaProfessionals	\$109,243
Computer/Library aids	\$108,649
Maintenance Staff	\$80,123
Custodial cuts	\$12,000
Computer Replacements	\$49,600
Other	\$104,543
Total	\$1,679,954

Dr. LaCroix said that just before the holiday break, the Finance Committee voted on budget guidelines. The school's guideline is 2.06% increase from FY2010 or a total budget request of \$31,743,135.

The challenge, according to Dr. LaCroix, is to reduce the original "Maintenance of Services" budget request by \$1,038,054.

Dr. LaCroix's proposal to meet this guideline is as follows:

SPED ODD	\$396,750
SPED indistrict	\$ 66,000
Utilities	\$54,000
Professional salaries	\$359,696
Computer/library aids	\$41,305
Summer maintenance help	\$18,800
Custodial supplies	\$4,000
Computer replacements	\$36,000
Other	\$61,498
Total	\$1,038,054

Dr. LaCroix summarized the impact:

- No school resource officers
- No Director of Curriculum (saves classroom cuts)
- Reductions in Teacher ERI/Sick leave buy backs (assumes no retirements)
- No summer custodians
- No window washing contract
- Energy conservation savings
- Grade 2 teacher elimination
- Davis School reductions in equipment, supplies and library books
- Lane School reductions in library books and general supplies
- Reductions in JGMS music (.2) and gifted program (.4)
- Reduction of JGMS library aide
- Eliminate JGMS intramural stipend
- Reductions in JGMS supplies and library books
- 1 FTE reduction across all departments in High School
- .4 reduction in Occupational Education program administrator
- Eliminate freshman assistant football coach position
- Eliminate 1.0 library aid from High School
- Reductions in High School library books, instructional supplies
- Reduce computer replacements by 40
- Reduce Special education contracted services

Dr. LaCroix made some comments about the above implications.

- The High School is on an upward enrollment trend so any cuts will mean larger class sizes.
- The Director of Curriculum's work will still need to be done but this move does prevent further classroom cuts.

Dr. LaCroix explained that it is never easy to go back into the budget to make a million dollars of cuts. The Administrative Team has spent many hours preparing these recommendations while always focusing on maintaining the services our community expects.

The next step is for the School Committee to review and to vote an FY'11 budget request on January 26, 2010. The presentation to the Finance Committee will be on January 28, 2010. Annual Town Meeting is in March.

Ms. Bickford asked if the budget presented tonight ends up with a 6.1 FTE reduction?

Dr. LaCroix said she thought it was a 6.0 reduction but would double check.

Ms. Bickford asked for more concrete information on how the School Resource Officer has helped students over the last two years. She also wondered whether we could reduce the SRO program without eliminating it entirely.

Ms. Bickford said that she is concerned with cutting the Grade 2 teacher especially since the teacher that would have to leave has ELL training and that chances are, we will have to refill the position next year when the larger class moves through.

Ms. Bickford said she would like to know the music department's response to combining girls and boys choir at the middle school. She fears this will make the boys leave the

JGMS chorus and decrease involvement of males in the High School's music programs as a result.

Ms. Bickford would like some feedback on the possibilities of getting volunteers to help cover lunches, clerical work, and supervision to keep libraries open. Dr. LaCroix agreed to look into this possibility.

Ms. Bickford also thinks more information is needed on the effects of removing the Assistant Football coach for freshmen.

Ms. Bickford also would like to know the effect of losing the Program Administrator position for Occupational Education.

Ms. Bickford pointed out that CASE tuition and transportation reductions have been realized due to the recent vote. Dr. LaCroix confirmed that her number used tonight is a solid number as is the number used for Early Retirements since the cut off date for retirements next year has passed.

Ms. Bickford asked for the number of special education 45-day placements that have occurred over the last five years. This information, as well as any other historical information on other SPED contracted services, will help the School Committee evaluate the risk associated with reducing this line item in the budget for next year. Dr. LaCroix agreed to provide this information.

Ms. O'Gara said she is trying to understand the impact at the high school with eliminating personnel. She understands that the collective bargaining agreements will allow bumping and she wonders how this will affect specialized teachers. Dr. LaCroix said licensing comes into play under these scenarios and it will affect both the high school and the middle school. Dr. LaCroix said the cuts in personnel make a small impact with the budget numbers but will have a drastic ripple affect across all of the schools in the district.

Ms. O'Gara fears that a lot of these cuts will be detrimental to the school environment and cause an increase in behavior issues.

Ms. Seibert thanked Dr. LaCroix for presenting all of this information. She is concerned that we will run into accreditation issues due to changes in the libraries. She is also very concerned about the effect of losing the School Resource officers because they are so valuable not only to our schools but to the entire community.

Ms. Seibert asked to see a summary of staffing changes.

Ms. Dickinson Meltz asked about some of the changes proposed for the high school and Dr. LaCroix clarified them for her.

Mr. Hafer recommended that the School Committee look at all of the restored items to make sure they are in agreement.

Mr. Pierce suggested looking at the enrollment projections for Davis to see if it makes sense to lose a good second grade teacher.

Mr. Pierce asked if there should be a School Committee meeting on January 19th. Dr. LaCroix suggested meeting after the January 21, 2010 Fiscal Planning meeting. Therefore, the School Committee agreed to call a meeting for Friday morning, January 22 at 7:30.

The School Committee reviewed the following information provided by Mr. Coelho regarding fees:

Transportation Fees (\$222,000 estimated revenue).

The School Committee thought this seemed high. The law prohibits charging fees for K-6 students who live more than 2 miles away. Records show that the majority of students live more than 2 miles away from the schools. The School Committee also feels that having no cap for families will hurt the families of Bedford. The School Committee also fears the ripple of effect of having more families drive their children to school.

Parking Fees (estimates 127 participants)

The School Committee noted that the schools do not own all of the parking spots (use St. Michael's lot) and that any money generated would go to the DPW budget and not the school's budget. Therefore, this change would not affect the budget at all.

Athletic Fees/Activity Fees (proposed \$100 per sport and \$75 per activity)

The School Committee discussed that institution of these fees could generate a lot of money but felt that it would be very burdensome for families.

Mr. Hafer did point out that many families are used to paying fees for sports prior to high school (recreation). Mr. Pierce countered that it is different with competitive sports. Even playing time at the Middle and High School levels is not a given because it is based on talent.

Ms. Seibert questions whether fees are legitimate for public schools. She does not think fees should be imposed on any part of public education.

Ms. Bickford said she does not want to resort to fees to help meet budget constraints. Extracurricular activities are important to the High School experience. Transportation and parking fees have ramifications outside of school and all are burdensome on families. "Bedford has its share of traffic issues without additional drop offs due to imposing transportation fees."

Ms. O'Gara said fees will be discriminatory especially in tough economic times.

Mr. Pierce pointed out that many town services do not impose fees. Philosophically, Bedford leadership does not want to impose fees on its residents.

5. Discussion of Memorandum of Agreement for Race to the Top Grant

Dr. LaCroix explained that Massachusetts is competing in the Race to the Top – a competitive \$4.35 billion education reform program enacted by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Massachusetts could qualify for up to \$250 million over four years. The US Department of Education will only consider states with strong

commitments from Local Education Agencies. One such commitment is for the Local Education Agency to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The School Committee recently met to have the Chairman sign this MOU in support of the State's effort to apply for this Federal grant. Dr. LaCroix presented the MOU and explained that all three parties from Bedford have signed. (The School Committee, the Education Association and the Superintendent). She has also asked these same parties to sign a local memorandum of understanding on Bedford's efforts. So far, the Education Association has signed an articulation memo. The School Committee needs to consider signing as well.

Ms. Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee authorize the Chairperson to execute the Memorandum of Understanding between the School Committee and the Education Association relative to the Federal Race to the Top Grant (RTTT)'s Memorandum of Understanding for the Federal grant application.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O'Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

6. Minutes for Review

Ms. Bickford suggested moving the Minutes for Review to the next meeting since it is late. School Committee members agreed.

7. Liaison Reports

None

8. Adjournment

Ms Bickford made the following motion:

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 11:10 p.m.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. O'Gara

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Pierce	Yes
Ms. Seibert	Yes
Mr. Hafer	Yes
Ms. Bickford	Yes
Ms. O'Gara	Yes

School Committee Secretary

Date

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**EXECUTIVE SEESION
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