

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
December 15, 2015
Bedford High School - Large Group Instruction Room

1. Call to Order

At 7:30 p.m., Mr. McAllister called to order the meeting of the Bedford School Committee. Other members present included Ms. Guay, Mr. Pierce, Mr. Hafer and Mr. Brosgol.

2. Comments from Public

None

3. Personnel Report

Mr. Sills announced the appointment of Terrence Favors as a Teaching Assistant at Bedford High School.

4. Class Size Report

Mr. Sills presented an updated Class Size Chart of other nearby/similar-sized school districts. He hoped that this information would provide some context for his recommended class size guidelines below:

	<u>Guideline</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
Kindergarten	18	20
Grade 1	20	22
Grades 2-5	22	24
Grades 6-8	23	25
High School	20	(college prep)
	22	25 (honors and high honors)

Mr. Sills said the building Principal's agree with the above ranges.

Mr. Pierce said he views this as a guideline and not a policy. He likes the flexibility of guidelines over policies. He also does not want class size to become a teacher contract issue.

Mr. Brosgol agrees with the guideline philosophy. He is concerned that we may end up being over the maximum in kindergarten right away given the recent surges in kindergarten enrollments.

Both Mr. Brosgol and Mr. Pierce said that it is important to understand the effect of having additional adult support in the classrooms, something common in Bedford and may not be in other districts.

Ms. Guay noted that a lot of the other towns have built in flexibility by being able to shift students to other schools in town when necessary and we do not have this option.

Mr. McAllister said he believes it will be helpful to have established class size guidelines. However, he said that low numbers in a classroom can lead to misleading assumptions (For example a small number of students does not automatically mean easy classroom management.) He would like to use these guidelines numbers as a means to guide leadership decisions and budgets. The numbers should not set the tone or goals of the schools.

Ms. Guay agreed with Mr. McAllister and thinks these guidelines will be helpful with discussions with the community as well.

Mr. Sills said he agrees with using these numbers as guidelines and not formal policy. He does think that it is important to set a number that is acceptable and one that is not.

Mr. Sills said he is not aware of any district-wide or state guideline and his proposal tonight is an attempt to clarify and not make a drastic change.

5. Superintendent's FY'17 Budget Request

Mr. Sills began the budget presentation by reviewing the community expectations which the FY'17 budget is based on.

Bedford residents support:

- a sustained commitment to the arts
- Top MCAS and AP score rankings
- A comprehensive curriculum
- Innovative instructional strategies
- Highly talented and caring staff
- The ability to meet the needs of a diverse student body
- Ample athletics and extracurricular opportunities for all
- College and career readiness for all
- Cost-conscious planning that respects the community's fiscal conditions

Overall, the FY'17 budget request is \$ 37,510,431 which is a 3.96% increase over the FY'16 budget of \$36,080,578. Mr. Sills explained that \$37,139,569 is a maintenance of effort (2.94%). \$370,862 (1.02%) is for expansion in the areas of special education staff, instructional coaching, curriculum leadership, clerical support, and a moderate increase in professional development, software and technology supplies and devices for Davis, Lane and JGMS.

Mr. Sills said that the addition of the school nurses to the school department budget has been kept separate for tonight's discussion. He also explained that "maintenance of effort" means being able to meet all contractual obligations.

Mr. Sills reported that key FY'17 budget drivers as being:

1. Enrollment
2. Behavioral and special education needs
3. Program improvement
4. In-house special education impact on OOD budget

Enrollment

The NESDEC report projects that kindergarten enrollment will continue to increase. However, Principal Benoit, would like to keep nine kindergarten classrooms with the additional support of an Interventionist. (Same model as this year.) Therefore, Davis does not need a third modular at this time and will not have to add staff associated with a tenth classroom for kindergarten. The inclusion model (three classroom cluster) at Davis will also allow for the elimination of the Integrated Kindergarten and Integrated First Grade classrooms thereby allowing a more even distribution of students across the two grades.

Meanwhile, an expected decline at the high school will enable a 1.2 professional staff FTE reduction without affecting class size guidelines.

Social-Emotional/Behavior Needs

Mr. Sills explained that the increasingly complex student population (regular and special education) continues to confront staff with a growing array of behavioral and social emotional challenges. The existing elementary BCBA is unable to effectively support both Lane and Davis schools. Therefore, with the elimination of two Teaching Assistant positions, Mr. Sills can hire a full time BCBA for both schools and can add some FTE for clerical special education support for Lane and Davis schools. Lane school will also move to having a full time adjustment counselor.

Program Improvement

Mr. Sills proposes adding an ELA Coordinator for grades K-5. He would also like to add a .5 K-12 Reading Program Administrator. (Costs will be offset by elimination of some teaching assistant positions in ELA). He also proposes adding Instructional Coaches, a half time interventionist, and a few stipends for ELL Chair, STEP Team Chair, and wrestling coach.

Mr. Sills said that the high school wants to create a Campus Aid position and to hire some clerical support for the Technology Department.

In-House Special Education Program Impact

The Out-of-District transportation line item for FY'17 is down \$300,000 due to a significant decrease in the CASE transportation assessment. The decrease is due to changes in ridership distance, the numbers of students per van, and changes in placement. Also, given decreasing numbers of students at CASE placements due to our in-house program development, this number is further reduced. (22 in 2010-11 to 7 in 2015-16)

Mr. Coelho then discussed budget offset projections from State, federal and local reserve accounts. Currently, he estimates that the total offset will be \$2,744,242, just below last year's number due to reductions in the eRate and Food Services.

Mr. Sills then analyzed the FY'17 budget request by comparing teacher salary v. property value/tax rates of Bedford and neighboring towns.

Mr. Sills provided the School Committee with additional information including the salary line item breakdown, changes in operating and transportation expenses and special education expenses. He shared a chart comparing budget increases and with offsets.

Overall, Mr. Sills said he believes this budget request is a modest request. He looked for savings to offset any costs.

Mr. McAllister asked the School Committee to limit questions and comments tonight and that over the next two weeks, digest all of the information and develop more specific questions and requests for more information. School Committee members agreed.

Mr. Hafer said he thought the charts presented tonight were very clear and helpful. He would like to learn more about the CASE transportation savings and to discuss where the METCO grant money is applied.

Mr. Pierce said that it was helpful to see total expenses so he can understand for example, what the METCO and Early Childhood grants cover and do not cover.

Mr. Pierce also pointed out that the budget did not use the updated NESDEC enrollment numbers.

Mr. Pierce also told Mr. Sills to be prepared to give reasons as to why we need clerical support for the Technology Department and a campus aide at the high school.

Mr. Brosgol said he would like to know why there are fewer freshman athletes, fewer foreign language classes and fewer social studies classes. Also, he wonders why the numbers of special education students is growing at the high school. Mr. Sills agreed to look into these questions and provide more information.

Ms. Guay said a pie chart showing the different disability categories would be helpful.

Mr. McAllister thanked Mr. Sills and Mr. Coelho for providing so much budget and analysis information upfront.

6. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Sills asked the School Committee to vote on the request presented last week to buy new AP Spanish e-books.

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the purchase of AP Spanish ebooks as presented last week, at a cost of \$5,350 for six years.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Guay

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Sills asked the School Committee to approve a gift of \$2,054 from BEST.

Mr. Pierce made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the gift of \$2054.50 from BEST towards the cost of a Gaga Pit for Davis School.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Hafer

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

The School Committee thanked BEST for its generous gift for Davis School students.

7. Liaison Reports

None

8. Minutes

Mr. Hafer made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes from the October 20, 2015 School Committee meeting as amended.

MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Pierce

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Mr. Hafer made the following motion:

MOVED: That the School Committee approve the minutes from the November 3, 2015 School Committee meeting.
MOTION SECONDED by Mr. Brosgol
MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

9. Future Agenda

School Committee members asked to hear an update on the status of the Lift for the Press box. Ms. Guay requested additional information on Medicaid/Medicare. Mr. McAllister asked for a revolving fund update.

The meeting schedule for the next month will be January 5th, 19th and 26th.

Mr. Hafer announced that he will not be seeking re-election to the School Committee. Therefore, there will be at least one open position for any resident interested.

All School Committee members thanked Mr. Hafer for his valued service over the last several years.

10. Adjournment

Mr. Brosgol made the following motion.

MOVED: Motion to adjourn at 10:00 p.m. not to reopen.

MOTION SECONDED by Ms. Guay

MOTION APPROVED: 5-0

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. McAllister	Yes
Ms. Guay	Yes
Mr. Brosgol	Yes
Mr. Pierce	Yes
Mr. Hafer	Yes

School Committee Secretary

Date

BEDFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
December 15, 2015
Exhibits/Document

- Presentation: Superintendent's FY17 Budget Request
- Draft of minutes from the October 20, 2015 School Committee meeting.
- Draft of minutes from the November 3, 2015 School Committee meeting.