

Board of Education Special Meeting
February 11, 2019

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. in the Suffield Middle School Auditorium. The meeting opened with the pledge of allegiance.

Present: Board members Susan Mercik Davis, Jamie Drzyzga, James Mol, John Richter, Debra Dudack, Michael Sepko, Brian Fry; Interim Superintendent Mark Winzler, Assistant Superintendent Michelle Zawawi, Business Manager Bill Hoff, and Interim Director of Special Services Glenn McGrath

Absent: Matt Service, Maureen Sattan, and SHS Student Representatives Hannah Stack and Sarah Dubocq

Budget Workshop

Mr. McGrath presented the proposed 2019-2020 special services budget to the Board of Education. The budget request is based on the findings of his review of the special education department and the recommendations he made in his presentation to the Board on January 14. One of the primary increases to the budget is salaries, which is due to the addition of the secondary special education supervisor, the addition of a 1.0 Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), the addition of a 1.0 special education teacher at the middle school, and the addition of a Speech and Language Pathologist Assistant (SLPA). It was determined an additional supervisor was needed for programming and oversight, the BCBA and special education teacher at the middle school will help build capacity in-house and give the district the ability to slowly phase out the Center for Children with Special Needs (CCSN); a reduction of approximately \$100,000 for CCSN services is proposed with this budget, and the SLPA will provide the much needed support for current SLPs at a much lower cost than hiring another SLP. Mr. McGrath also noted that SLPs are an extreme shortage area and is a difficult position to fill. In addition to the additional certified special education staffing, this budget includes the addition of three paraeducators. Mr. McGrath said the recent decreases to paraeducator staffing were necessary but too many paraeducators were reduced. The Board questioned and discussed the hiring of additional special services staff, specifically the special education teacher and SLPA. Out of district placements was also discussed and the impact those outplacements have on the budget. They also discussed the number and role of paraeducators in the district. Mr. McGrath noted that budgeting for special education is challenging because there are many unknowns that can significantly impact the budget. He added that the department is developing a department improvement plan that will use his findings and CREC's to strengthen and improve the department. A main area in need of improvement is strengthening the continuum of services which will result in the reduction of out of district placements. Mr. Hoff explained the Excess Cost Reimbursement formula the district receives for special education costs.

Mercik Davis left at 7:30 p.m. returned at 7:33 p.m.

Mr. McGrath reviewed the proposed 2019-2020 pupil personnel services budget, which includes school counselors, psychologists, nurses, OTs, PTs, and SLPs. There are no real changes other than the hiring of an SLPA mentioned earlier. He added that the district is reviewing whether to hire the OT as an employee. Currently this is a contracted position.

Mr. Hoff presented the proposed 2019-2020 General Services budget to the Board of Education. He reviewed the budgeted increases for utilities which include water, electricity and natural gas. Mr. Hoff explained the categories that make up general services which include BOE expenses, central office, personnel, benefits, administration, transportation and services.

Board member Sepko reviewed the budget schedule and asked board members to send any budget questions to him which he will compile and send to Mr. Winzler. Mr. Winzler asked that Board members send them in as soon as possible so the administration can have the answers for the February 20 Board meeting.

Dudack left at 8:27 p.m., returned to 8:29 p.m.

The Board discussed the process of presenting the Board of Education budget to the Board of Finance and how to prepare for the presentation. They also discussed the current condition of state and federal grants the district receives, specifically how the last few years of low budget increases has led to the spending down of the grants.

Mercik Davis left the meeting at 8:36 p.m.

Drzyzga left the meeting at 9:01 p.m., returned at 9:04 p.m.

Adjournment

Richter moved, Mol seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 p.m.

Minutes are subject to approval at the regular meeting of March 4, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Dudack
Secretary