

**Willington Board of Education  
Special Meeting  
Budget Workshop  
January 16, 2019, 6:00 p.m.  
Town Office Building, Upper Level Meeting Room**

Audio Recording: yes

Notes Taken: yes

**Members Present:**

Herb Arico

Tracey Anderson

Chiara Bambara

Michelle Doucette Cunningham

Ann Grosjean

Stephanie Summers

Elena Testa

**Members Absent**

None

Also present: Superintendent of Schools Phil Stevens, Director of Special Education Marcia McGinley

1. **Call to Order:** M. Doucette Cunningham called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. She noted if anyone wanted to speak to please sign in.
2. **Present to Speak:** None
3. Follow up to Willington Public Schools' Superintendent's 2019-2020 Spending Plan (Budget)

P. Stevens stated that there is a max of 3% without getting into contractual items we have no control over. He talked about the breakdown of funds in the stipends that are paid out to coaches, extracurricular activities, staff development, and maintenance. The board discussed the amount we pay in stipend positions, compared to hiring a curriculum chairperson. In addition, we don't have a maintenance facility director meaning our maintenance staff work beyond their contract. P. Stevens stated how vital these stipend positions are and if eliminated it would be detrimental to our schools.

**Program 3: Special Education and Related Services**

P. Stevens started by welcoming our new Director of Special Education Marcia McGinley. We currently have 70 students identified and 10 certified teachers. We currently have 23 paraprofessionals, 12 at Center and 11 at Hall. All paras are dictated by student IEP whether it's 1:1 support or in a group setting.

Para salaries of the 8 we have in the classified union in Willington went up \$6,000. As a district, we are required to pay benefits to these individuals. Our other 15 paras are contracted through Eastconn and CREC and they pay their benefits in their rate they charge. There is a significant increase in this department as we originally planned for 18 and we now have 23 paraprofessionals. P. Stevens noted that as M. McGinley does her annual review we can dismiss students and reduce hours as applicable,

however, this number can fluctuate based on students entering or leaving the district. At this time we are expecting to have two out of district placements next year.

H. Arico questioned the amount of money budgeted for these outplacements (\$153,000). M. McGinley explains that we do not get to dictate the facility in which we send these students, as that is all determined by the child's needs. As an example, we could send two students to the same location but the cost could be different based on their specific needs including transportation.

P. Stevens continued sharing the certified sub budget was flat. We contract out OT/PT that come into our buildings two days a week. Our behavior consultant went up \$8,000 and it is one of our most critical services. The BCBA comes in and works with our teachers to help train them in different techniques which ultimately helps to keep students in our district. M. McGinley notes that she's very impressed with this collaboration and the program is phenomenal. She adds that it is beneficial to our students as our teachers and staff utilizes these trainings and continue to gain skills.

Transportation went down \$40,000. As a district, we collaborate with Eastconn for shared transportation to share the cost when allowed. The supplies went down some as no new equipment was requested this year. As a reminder, if someone comes in and needs special equipment we may be required to buy it.

#### **Program 5: Health Services**

P. Stevens stated that we have two nurses, one in each building. There was a slight contractual increase, however, the supplies budget was left flat at just under \$4,000 for both schools. It was also noted how fortunate we are to have two very good sub nurses that are reasonably priced. C. Bambara questioned if we had requirements to supply EpiPens or antidotes for overdoses for students and how that would affect the budget. P. Stevens noted that we do not currently have a policy in place for overdoses but that EpiPens are provided by the families. There is one in stock in case there is a student with an unknown allergy.

#### **Program 6: Program for Curriculum and Staff Development**

P. Stevens started by saying this is a priority to improve our ability to deliver instruction. Sometimes it's used for subs so staff can write curriculum or special workshops we need to train staff. This is what we're using to move forward with our curriculum. He continues saying that our staff have gotten a lot of critical PD over the last two years. We try and train a few teachers and then they come back and share their knowledge.

S. Summers questions what kind of fallout we would see from the cuts in this department. It was discussed that it slows down the amount of curriculum you can ask people to write and the amount of training we can provide. Cutting down some is reasonable, but the time is being utilized very well.

H. Arico questions whether or not we can maintain programs with curriculum with the receding budget. To keep current with educational philosophy we need to provide adequate PD for our staff. P. Stevens comments on how creative our staff is and their ability to do things in-house. C. Bambara notes how some schools have done webinars as a group and the staff collaborates and works together.

#### **Program 7: Utilities**

Most items were left flat. Heating oil went up 22 cents and we're locked into a price. Years ago our schools essentially went through an energy audit and we received \$600,000 of work for a boiler, spray foam insulation, valves, and energy efficient lights and you would pay back over the course of 17 years.

The board discussed different options to get it out of our operating budget and into our capital improvement budget

A. Grosjean questions if they are still providing any services. P. Stevens noted there were services they provided for the first two years. They were charging about \$5,000 an audit to make sure we had savings. At the time there were savings. Right now we self-audit by looking at the water usage and electricity usage to make sure there are no spikes and if there are we see what it is.

**Program 10: Fringe Benefits/Substitutes**

Subs went up to a more accurate number based on usage. We've had two teachers this year go out on leave requiring long term subs. Anything over 40 contracted days requires bachelor degree pay, not sub pay.

Medical/dental/life insurance is up 14.5% based on the actual number of people who want it. Unemployment is \$6,000. Tuition reimbursement is contractual for people taking classes beyond a master's up to \$800 a year.

**5. Present to speak:**

Chris Hughes 74 Willington Hill- Requested an electronic copy of the budget plan. He would also like the last two years of the budget as he just moved here so he'd like to see the actual budgets.

P. Stevens- States the proposed budget is online and the past two years are shown with the current proposal.

C. Hughes- Questions that around 25% of our budget is going to special education and wonders if that normal across other districts.

M. Doucette Cunningham- Responds by saying that it is not unusual and that it varies year to year.

M. McGinley adds that all school districts struggle with this because the costs are certainly on the rise.

Barbra Gounaris of 69 Willington Hill-Curious about the elimination of enrichment specialist. Do we have other specialists for the students?

M. Doucette Cunningham- Responds saying its a bigger question because there are a lot of specialties that teachers have so it's hard to say exactly. This cut was made with prioritizing in keeping classroom sizes small, however, many people expressed great distress at this cut so we will be having further conversations about what exactly would be cut.

M. Doucette Cunningham would like to give the board a chance to give final word if they choose.

T. Anderson- Expresses that its very frustrating because our business is people, and we're not spending money on luxury items. Significant cost increases are causing us to eliminate people from our system that are quality and we worked hard to get.

**6. Adjournment at 7:45 pm.**

Andrea Byberg  
Recorder