

Southern Berkshire Regional School District
Finance Sub-committee meeting
Sheffield, MA
December 7, 2016

Members in attendance: Art Batacchi, Jr, Marcella Bush, Charles Flynn, David Hastings, Fran Lartigue, Christine Regan, Dennis Sears

Presentations given by: Chris Thompson (Technology), Glen Devoti (Secondary School)

Others in attendance: Kerry Burke

Dennis Sears called the meeting to order at 5:02pm.

Charlie Flynn made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 6, 2016 meeting, the motion was seconded by Fran Lartigue, all in favor.

Presentation of FY18 Departmental Budgets Part 2

Christine Regan began the meeting by giving each member spreadsheets for the presenting department budgets:

1. Technology -- presented by Chris Thompson
2. Secondary School -- presented by Glen Devoti

1. Technology -- Chris Thompson

Chris Thompson went over the technology budget presentation only highlighting any changes. He explained that soft ware packages are now line items on the budget and went over how they are broken down.

Fran Lartigue asked about a \$3,000 expenditure for Atlas Curriculum Mapping (page 1) to which Chris Thompson said that it was not new just a shift in the budget. Christine Regan then explained the transfers.

Dennis Sears noted that there is an overall decrease of approximately \$2,500.

Ms. Lartigue asked about requests for hardware. Mr. Thompson responded that hardware requests will be directed to the Building, Grounds & Technology Sub committee.

Ms. Lartigue asked about the virtual high school (VHS).

Mr. Thompson stated that they are not using VHS this year and feels that VHS should be dropped and use Edgenuity instead. They used VHS for AP Biology, no one is taking this class this year. Mr. Thompson explained that although Edgenuity doesn't offer AP Biology, it could be bought through VHS in an a la carte fashion.

Glen Devoti talked about offering AP Biology as an actual class instead of as an on-line class. Conversation ensued regarding the difficulty of taking this class on line, especially the lab part of the class.

Ms. Lartigue asked if students can take an AP course with out taking the AP exam. Mr. Devoti stated that they certainly make allowances for that and explained how if a student does not take the AP exam, he/she gets credit for the class as an “honors” class as opposed to credit for an AP class.

Mr. Flynn asked if computers are ready for PARC testing. Mr. Thompson responded that they are.

Discussion ensued regarding the next generation of MCAS testing which will be on line.

Ms. Lartigue asked if any differences/correlations have been noted between the students paper based classroom work vs. computer work. Kerry Burk stated that it does not seem that computer work gets in the way of paper based work and that the students seem very comfortable with the computers and perform well.

Mr. Flynn noted that in his experience children adjust well to computers. He also asked about invigorating older desktop computers with greater speed and performance. This would make good use of these computers and save money and make more computers available. Mr. Thompson confirmed this.

2. Secondary School -- Glen Devoti

Mr. Devoti stated he has no request for additional staff and will in fact be looking to decrease the staff in the near future. This budget is for supplies only.

Mr. Flynn noted a significant decrease in the math budget by \$14,000 (page 2).

Cost for field trips was discussed. The Washington, D.C. trip was specifically discussed. Mr. Devoti stated that “no one who cant afford this trip doesn’t go.” Ms. Lartigue asked about how these costs are off set, Mr. Devoti stated that they hold fund raisers, parents and local businesses help out as well.

Mr. Devoti asked Ms. Burke if the \$3,000 for Academic support (page 1) was still needed. Ms. Burke explained its need & efficiency.

Conversation ensued regard the transportation budget for athletics. Mr. Devoti stated that they are looking at costs regarding the “marshmallow buses” vs. the big yellow school buses. Mr. Flynn asked about a cost analysis regarding this and Ms. Regan explained what the approximate savings are by using the marshmallow buses. She also stated that these buses are not expensive to run during a normal month. (Approximately \$300/month for gas)

Conversation then ensued regarding the purchase of a generator (page 3).

Mr. Flynn suggested putting this cost into a capital fund, explained the workings of a generator and, stressed the importance of buying a good quality generator (one that has 1,000-1,500 watts) .

Ms. Regan then pointed out a \$7,000 increase in athletics transportation (page 7). This is due to athletic fees, cost of officials, and as teams get better, they qualify for more tournaments. Tournaments are usually further away. Also, because we are not a part of a league, teams need to travel to play other teams.

Ms. Lartigue asked why there is a need for police at hockey games and at tournaments. Conversation on this topic continued and it was confirmed that it was better to have police present when there are large crowds.

There was also conversation about sports and band uniforms. They are quality uniforms and last for many years.

Mr. Sears asked about the Virtual High School agreement between Lee, Lenox and Berkshire Hills. There was concern about us pulling out of the VHS and leaving the other 3 schools with a bigger bill. It was questioned whether we should collaborate with them and find something better. Mr Flynn expressed concern over spending \$5,000 of tax payer money for something we are not using. Mr Devoti stated that we should not pay a penalty for moving forward when other schools are not.

Mr. Flynn suggested "starting small" with the Edgenuity program. He suggested having a shared collaboration with one school that shares our demographics before trying to collaborate with all four schools.

Ms. Regan discussed the insurance changes with the Berkshire Health Group. She discussed how the insurance plan changes and what the possible options might be – premiums are expected to go down and deductibles are expected to go up. Ms. Regan will attend a meeting on Friday, 12/9/16 where these decisions will be made.

Ms. Lartigue made a motion to adjourn at 6:20 pm, it was seconded by Art Batacchi, all in favor.

Minutes taken by Marcella Bush