

**Southern Berkshire Regional School District**

**Finance Sub – Committee**

**Attendance: Dennis Sears, Art Batacchi, Francoise Lartigue, David Hastings, Chris Regan, Kerry Burke & Nat Yohalem (arriving late)**

**Not in attendance: Charles Flynn and Marcella Bush**

**March 7, 2017**

**Call to Order 6:05 pm**

**During the previous Finance Committee Meeting, the Committee had asked Superintendent Hastings to look into a variety of ideas to increase savings. David Hastings presented his findings**

**Questions from the February 28, 2017 Finance Subcommittee meeting, with Answers**

**Below are the votes and requests generated by the Finance Subcommittee during its meeting on Tuesday, February 28, 2017:**

- 1. Vote - Superintendent should discuss possible cuts with Glenn.**
  - a. Glenn Devoti has contingency planning that will allow him to make staff reductions if necessary. Any staff reductions must be negotiated with the SBREA.

**Given the declining population, Mr. Hastings presented that Glenn Devoti would be able to cut up to two teachers without changing the programs in the high school. This would be possible through combing classes and alternating years for some programs. It was estimated the cost savings of this cut would be approximately \$100,000,**

**The Finance committee discussed. Consensus was reached, if teachers were being underutilized something had to be done about it since tax payers can't be expected to subsidize jobs.**

- 2. Vote – Request that the administration provide savings associated with the possible suspension of operations at the South Egremont School for the 2017-18 school year.**
  - a. Chris Regan has figured that additional savings could total over \$70,000. We already reduced the FY-2018 budget by approximately \$30,000, assuming that we would replace the retiring teacher with a less experienced person.

**David Hastings presented additional information based on recent numbers that he had received from the district kindergarten registration day indicating that as few as three children might be interested in attending the Egremont School.**

The Finance Committee discussed at length. It was noted that a suspension of operation for the year seemed to make sense at this time due to low to no enrollment, impending construction of the Egremont School building and a lack of teacher. Ms. Lartigue noted the seriousness of this cut and noted that this should only be for the year. She insisted further conversation taking place about the school and low enrollment during the course of the following year. Mr. Sears confirmed that it would be a year suspension and further conversation needed to occur.

3. Request: Superintendent should report on student counts (Egremont/In-District/Choice) for South Egremont over years. History of Students coming from South Egremont and New Marlborough to UME and staying in the district.
  - a. The document is attached. Retention rates by grade 12 are 78% for students starting in New Marlborough and 33% for students starting in South Egremont.

**Finance Committee discussed.**

4. **Vote – Explore with union staff cuts that would result from moving 6<sup>th</sup> grade to Mount Everett for 2017-18 school year.**
  - a. This move of the sixth grade to Mount Everett is currently planned for the 2018-19 school. The administration advises against making this move in the 2017-18 school year. There are teacher certification; student and parent issues as well as detailed planning that need to be completed prior to this move.
  - b. Dave Hastings and Kerry Burke met with Jamie Foster, President of the SBREA, regarding the possible two teacher reductions that could occur if grade six moved to Mount Everett. We informed the SBREA that we would work together to negotiate reaching the school committee's budget cut goals.
  - c. The estimated savings of this move, if done in the 2017-18 school year would be approximately \$90,000.

**Finance Committee discussed. Ms. Lartigue noted that perhaps this should happen sooner rather than later if it would be able to help the budget. Mr. Sears agreed. Mr. Hastings implored that a move like this needs to be done thoughtfully and carefully with participation from families. He also noted that Glen Devoti felt like he could make necessary cuts in the middle/high school without this move taking place in the 2017-18 school year. Mr. Batacchi agreed with Mr. Hastings. The Finance Committee agreed that since cuts of underutilized staff could occur whether or not the change was made, it was best to wait and explore the change further.**

5. Request – Stop allowing staff members to do PD on school days. Determine how much we spent on subs for PD last year.
  - a. Professional Development moved to the school year to reduce training costs. Prior to several years ago, teachers received per diem (approximately \$300 per day) for summer non-credit training as well as mileage. By providing training

during the school day, the only teacher-associated cost has the sub pay, at \$87.50 per day. This method allows many more teachers to receive necessary training, usually in teams.

- b. We are still working on assembling the substitute costs related to Professional Development. This is because subs are not required for all staff people who attend professional development during the school day (administrators, guidance, school adjustment counsellors and some others)

**The Finance Committee discussed. Mr. Hastings was encouraged to continually monitor the use of substitutes.**

6. Request – Look at stipends to see if there are people who are doing stipend work during the work day (double-dipping)
  - a. The administrative team looked at the current stipends and recommended that we eliminate funding for several non-filled stipends from the FY-2017 budget.

**The Finance Committee discussed.**

**7. Vote – Investigate how Curriculum/PD Coordinator tasks could be redistributed (to principals). Could the position be eliminated?**

- a. I have attached the updated list of duties and responsibilities related to this position.
- b. In short, the Principals would not be able to absorb the functions of the Curriculum and Professional Development Coordinator.
- c. The position plays a major role in the function of this district and could not be eliminated without serious negative impacts on the educational program.

**The Finance Committee discussed. After reviewing the lengthy list of tasks that Kerry Burke is responsible for, the committee concluded that it did not seem prudent at this time to eliminate her position. Ms. Lartigue noted that the district is in a position of impending change and things like this should be examined prior to “budget season” so they do not seem like a knee jerk reaction in order to save money.**

**8. Vote – Explore becoming more paperless by using more laptops (such as school committee member packets each month)**

- a. I have requested that Chris Thompson provide lap-tops to school committee members for use during meetings beginning in the April 6<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**The Finance Committee discussed. Mr. Hastings agreed that paper copies would be available upon request.**

9. Request – Explore sharing low-enrollment courses (such as AP/Honors) with other districts via Skype or inter-district transportation.
  - a. Transporting students between schools 183 times per year is not an option due to cost, liability and safety issues.
  - b. Creating a rigid schedule between two high schools that would allow a Virtual High School experience has proven to be a challenge since both schools have rotating schedules and special programs that cause schedule changes. The schools also have start times that differ from each other.
  - c. A program like Edgenuity provides the most flexibility possible.

**The Finance Committee discussed. Logistically this seems difficult due to transportation, schedules not being the same etc. Again, it was noted that we should begin looking into these types of opportunities now so we can be ready to implement them when we need them.**

- 10. Vote – Bring a plan for sharing courses with other districts to the full school committee**

**The Finance Committee discussed.**

- 11. Vote – Look at budget reductions of \$275,000 to \$380,000**

- a. The administration is proposing the addition of \$100,000 in E&D to the current revenue line.
- b. The administration believes that there could be an additional \$300,000 in budget cut across the several areas.

**Ms. Lartigue motioned to approve the budget presented which included cuts documented to the sum of \$390,108. Mr. Batacchi second.**

**Vote – Unanimous**

**Mr. Batacchi motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 pm. Ms. Lartigue second.**

**Vote – Unanimous**