

SELECTMEN'S WORKSHOP MINUTES

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Tuesday, April 2, 2019 at 6:00 PM
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TOWN HALL, 8 PARK STREET, ADAMS, MA 01220
TOWN CLERK
ADAMS MASS.

1st Floor, Board of Selectmen Meeting Room

CLERK
On the above date the Board of Selectmen held a Workshop Meeting. The meeting was called to order by *Chairman Duval* at 6:00 p.m. In attendance were *Vice Chairman Nowak*, *Members Blanchard, Hoyt and Bush*, as well as *Town Administrator Green*, *Superintendent of McCann School Brosnan*, *McCann Business Manager Maloney*, *Superintendent of Adams-Cheshire Regional School District Vosburgh* and *Business Manager Snyder* were also in attendance.

CALL TO ORDER

FY2020 Budget Review

McCann Vocational School: *Business Manager Maloney* advised that there were not a lot of changes in the budget. Last year there were a lot of cuts made to the budget, and the school had a .04% increase. Annually on average there is a 2.5% increase and this year there is a 2.36% increase. He noted that the drone and robotics programs were new, and there were funds and enthusiasm for mini-clubs such as these. Last year there were major cuts and there was concern about rebound from them, but everything possible was done to keep things where they are. Chapter 70 funding was reported to stay the same, marking five years of level funding in this budget line. It was noted that the Business and Principal offices were lean in staff and there are few paraprofessionals, which were hired for specific circumstances where someone needs help. It was explained that the original funding formulas from twenty-five years ago do not take these changes into account, which causes unintended consequences. Berkshire Health Group was noted as having no increase, which helped and some changes were made to the health plans which were less costly. Legacy costs were reviewed, and it was pointed out that there are as many retirees as active teachers, as they have been in business since 1961. It was explained that the State has new reporting requirements and there have been some account changes to adjust to that to be able to better track expenses and funds. The accomplishments of the students were reviewed. It was pointed out that over the last five years the Governor's Grant program for new equipment had been able to increase technology at no cost to McCann. Chapter 70 was noted as going up approximately \$8,000, which was level-funded due to inequities and rural communities. The municipal minimum assessment and capital assessments were reviewed. The revenue comparison chart was reviewed. The share of municipal assessment and transportation by district agreement and the assessment of Adams' share and capital were outlined. It was noted that the capital is formulated by the district wealth of the community. A \$70,000 increase to Adams from last year was explained as formula driven. It was noted that the percentage of students determines which district gets the money and statistically it is about the same number of students over the last seven years. The county was described as having fewer students per the October 1st report. Last year's Chapter 71 funds were reviewed and explained. It was pointed out that if the estimate is above what is needed the extra amount returns to the town. Capital calculation was reviewed. The updated Massachusetts Department of Revenue figures were noted as being a miniscule change. Statistical comparisons with local communities were made.

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It was explained that by line item it was pretty much a level-funded budget. The changes made to approximately six new accounts for were explained for accounting purposes. It was noted that the Superintendent receives the same increases as the employees per year. There were no changes in employee contracts. There is a new account for contract services for District Administrative Technology, which includes the grading system and blackboard system, student services and emergency services. The Principal's Account budget was down because of the adjustments, and some accounts reduced and some increased accordingly. Clerical salaries were reviewed. It was pointed out that a special education grant was used to fund most paraprofessionals. One position had to be added for a person that needed additional attention that could not be afforded with the grants. Information about the Librarian was reviewed. Library hardware and software were all covered. Contracted services were explained as having a large budget portion. Professional services come in to take care of the systems and replacement parts were reviewed in the budget. It was explained that contracted services for instruction amounted to around \$60,000 in software costs, of which most was provided by grants. The Ingenuity System for student credit recovery was explained and tough it does not eliminate summer school, it helps to avoid student failure and is a software system that students can use at home. The software is run by a teacher or paraprofessional in the afternoon to make up for lost work and injuries or absences to keep a student from falling behind. The Guidance budget was reviewed and it was noted that the contracted services increase was due to new accounts being mandated by the state and some of the technology costs for education or services. It was noted that the switch out of costs was just from one line to another. It was explained that some of the software now demands a different computer and students in the Computer Aided Drafting (CAD) program are running five sets of software. Computers are changed out every three years and the worst computers are weaned out. Electricity use was discussed and the school is becoming very efficient due to LED lighting replacements throughout the school. It was noted that the savings will be seen in the future. Students install materials as an instructional element. Fuel for vans and school vehicles was noted as being separated from maintenance costs. HVAC and plumbing was reviewed and it was noted that the sixty-year-old building is requiring more replacement of the heating system. Last year two heating units were budgeting for replacement but five were replaced so the budget was increased to prepare for that. The need to replace the windows in the building was brought up by Board Members, and it was noted that the location was a great area for use of solar to defray costs. Discussion took place regarding getting an MOA for an MSBA project as the last new roof was in 1997. At that time it was done by all of the towns coming together with no state aid. The timing of MSBA projects and combining it with the glass replacement was noted as the current strategy. It was noted that it takes two years to go through the MSBA process with the towns so it is realistic for it to take three or four years before the funding would be needed by the town. Currently roof leaks are being handled by a contractor, and it was pointed out that roofing materials since 1997 have changed dramatically. It was explained that there are walkways for every section of the roof and the walkway pads rip up with the wind causing leaks. Salaries of taking Information Technology instructors and students were reviewed and go through summertime to provide work on the system, maintenance and repairs on weekends and evenings. It was emphasized that there are 500 computers, and sophisticated systems. Employee benefits had only minor changes in insurance.

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Municipal retirement is for the North Adams retirement system for non-teaching employees. Severance was higher because last year was a heavy retirement year but this year is pretty light. Health insurance overall reduced for employees and retirees. Capital facility improvements included updating the 1961 era bathrooms. One bathroom is scheduled for this year and the replacement of floor tile. There are three main areas with asbestos tile that need to be removed and will be scheduled in three phases over the next year. A request was made for information on future capital projects to be provided for the board of each community to have for planning. An inquiry was made about what is seen as skills needed now in the community and if there was software and equipment available for students to meet this need. It was explained that the skills depend on what the goal is. There is a Governor's Capital Skills Grant program and Perkins Grants for technology and equipment upgrades. McCann is focusing on and working closer with Mass Hire and Berkshire Community College to run programs for people looking to fill vacancies and those who don't have the skills. Additional programs that have been started are the welding and journeyman electrical programs in the evening. Work is being done with General Dynamics on a new course that will hopefully roll out in April. McCann is trying to meet the demand and partner with different organizations, grant programs and statewide initiatives to get apprenticeship programs for manufacturing and other fields. The state will hopefully subsidize this and the school can do training in the evenings or Saturdays to help students develop critical thinking skills to be applied to the future. It was noted that student enrollment is expected to be statistically even and the school is not at capacity, which is a sign of the times. The budget formula was reviewed and it was pointed out that there are 38 parts to the formula, which is done by the state and calculated by a computer program. The formula was started in 1994 and has had very few changes since then. McCann School was thanked for the students building the Department of Public Works break room. Staff not only appreciated the facility upgrade but also the time with the students, which were spoken very highly of.

Adams-Cheshire Regional School District:

Vice Chairman Nowak advised he was recusing himself. At 7:06 p.m. *Vice Chairman Nowak* left the meeting.

Superintendent Vosburgh advised that the School District has students coming in without skills that students had ten years ago and the District has had to adapt to the needs of the students. *School Committee Chairman Butler* advised that work is being done to improve the school with a turnaround plan and at the expense of closing a school, but positive results have been seen. Member Hoyt was thanked for being the Board liaison to the Building Maintenance and School Committees. He noted the District's budget process began in November, and budget hearings were held in January to follow up and brought departments together to look at it as a whole. He gave the enrollment number of 1,110 students from Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12, which is down from last year which was 1250. He gave the statistics of students with high needs and advised that 24% are students with disabilities, where a typical school district has only 16%. He noted that the student disability percentages are climbing, and over 49% of students are economically disadvantaged, which is common in Berkshire County. He advised this informed the strategy about where to put funds. He explained that the School District lost students from Kindergarten through Grade 2 that do not come to Hoosac Valley Elementary School (HVES).

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Business Manager Snyder reviewed enrollment trends and total enrollment over the course of the past ten years. It was noted that the data is provided by the state and is available on the Department of Education website. A clarification was made that students with disabilities are identified by the need for individualized education plans or a "504 Plan". The disability could be cognitive, behavioral or emotional, and students would be provided with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). It was explained that students are tested and the designation shows a need of some sort of support in the classroom. He gave an example of the types of support needed by students. It was explained that the student numbers were reported differently because the preschool students are counted as a half student, so the District did not actually lose 50 students since October. She explained they were counted as full students on October 1st but now are counted as half students. School District Levels as designated by the Department of Education was briefly reviewed. While at Level 3, school district school assistance was received from the Center of Department of Education Group that meets with schools and creates turnaround plans so schools can improve systematically. This year each school demonstrated growth. Hoosac Valley High School (HVHS) is meeting 75% of the goals, and HVES is meeting 100% of the goals. He noted that the District is one year past the designation requiring assistance but still work to be done to keep from requiring further assistance from the state. He explained that the addition of Project Lead the Way had a lot of resources dedicated to it. School maintenance was reviewed. He outlined that almost the full chimney at HVES was removed, air conditioning and water fountains were installed, and the portico entrance by the McDonald's side was repaired before the start of school. The cafeteria floor was just finished and architects are forthcoming with a list of pending projects to continue making progress with maintenance. Architects are expected to be there during the April school vacation. The Governor's proposal for the budget was reviewed and it was noted that most towns are seeing some change in the Chapter 70 formula which focuses on fixed such as health insurance and requirements to educate students. The Cherry Sheet was reviewed for anticipated receipts. She reviewed what can be anticipated to be assessed for those utilizing School Choice and opting out. There is an increase from \$20 to \$25 per student through the Department of Education baseline. She noted there is reform on the way charter schools are being reimbursed and assessed, but it does not offset what is anticipated to be paid out. She explained that tuition changes every year and it is \$13,000 per student paid out for those attending a Charter School. \$740,000 is anticipated to be paid out on school choice students next year and the District receives \$5,000 per student for those coming to ACRSD from out of town. It was noted that more students opting to choice out than in and the closing of Cheshire Elementary School caused 10 to 15 students to leave, going from enrollment of 50 to 35. It is believed that there will be a trend of students coming back to the District due to increasing scores. It was noted that there are a lot of families moving in and out of the District and also families moving into the area but kids staying in their former school system. Savings and repurposing of funds were reviewed. An increase of funds for transportation and also in charter schools were noted and repurposed. There was a reduction in utility costs due to the net metering arrangement. She explained that repurposed funds were used to create new positions. A Sign Language Interpreter was no longer needed so a district Reading Interventionist and Learning Lab Teacher were included in the budget instead. The District is maintaining added positions from Fiscal Year 2018 through 2019 and is offering opportunities to do online classes.

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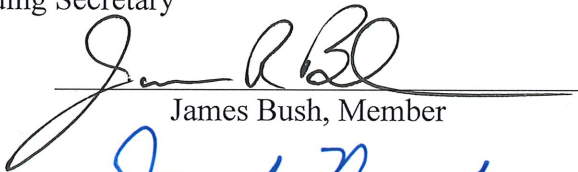
One of the positions would assist students doing online classes. The contribution to Adams Retirement increased significantly due to having the most members. Contractual increases were explained, as were charter school and choice assessment increases. It was noted that four teachers and textbooks were being funded from that line item but are being weaned out as there is not the funding to support it. It was pointed out that the School District is making this shift until it becomes stable. Some items were outlined as being moving parts, such as those still in negotiations and some units making up contractual agreements, out of district placements for special education needs, the School Resource Officer at the Middle/High School and the Excess and Deficiency end fund balance. It was explained that ACRSD is a district that keeps students requiring special services in-house whenever possible. Past programs have been as far away as Cape Cod, depending on the availability. It was clarified that the District doesn't get to determine where they go, but just has to be prepared for the cost at a Massachusetts approved facility. It was explained that Resource Officers, which are not a state mandate, are employees of the Police Department and not of the School District. Their role has changed regarding responsibilities and what they are able to do in a school. Resource Officers are not a state mandate. Excess and Deficiency was discussed in detail and the School District would be using some in a good faith effort to reduce assessments across the board. It was noted that based on expenditures, \$550,000 was used this year compared with \$607,000 last year. Budget components were read and the assessments to the towns and their calculations were reviewed. It was noted that the minimum local contribution is set by the state for the baseline. The target minimum local share is based on aggregate property valuations and aggregate personal income. The increase for Adams was noted as being \$130,207 since last year. The minimum foundation assessments to the town per the regional agreement, based on enrollment, as well as the total foundation assessment were reviewed. The increases and the transportation assessment calculations were explained. It was pointed out that the District is supplementing with \$50,000 from the revolving fund. Capital projects were reviewed. The District is paying off the boiler and building bonds. Assessments are based on enrollment in the school. Roof maintenance was reviewed and nothing has been budgeted for capital repairs next year. Two boiler bonds will be completed in 2023 and 2033. The total amount of the assessment to the Town of Adams is a 3.11% increase. Building debt was removed out of the levy limit and the total assessment within the levy limit up 3.498%. Transportation was noted as being all together as a regional district for both towns on one three year contract with a two year option to extend, and Dufour is the only bidder. Discussion took place on the strategy to get students to come back to the District. The District is currently in the process of what will be called Academies, which is an alignment of courses for Grades 6 through 12 that provide students with more focused education. Currently the three pathways being developed are communications, science and engineering, and human services to give kids a solid background when they leave high school and to prepare them for either college or the workplace. Some students are looking at doing internships, and may be able to work half a day and do an internship at General Dynamics or another business. By December of next year into the 2021 school year the District will have five defined pathways for students to be in. Holyoke is under receivership from the Department of Education and they are implementing academies. Discussion took place on how to promote the school district, and to target a promotion in the best way. The creation of a school identity was pondered.

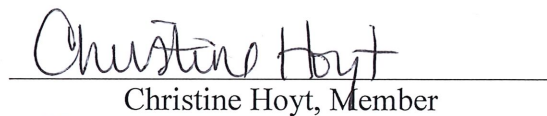
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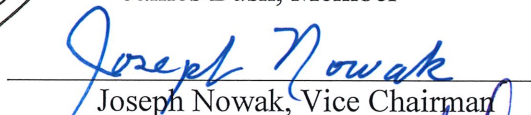
Superintendent awards are given and there is an abundance of electives. The District wants to be known academically as well as for having a good sports team, their performing arts, jazz concerts, and high school marching band in the parades. An inquiry was made about asking colleges to see if there are any areas that ACRSD students need more support in, and it was explained that this question has not been asked. Colleges talk about kids in general and may not specifically target needs from students of Hoosac Valley High School. Support that could come from the community was identified as parental support, housing, and community events and resources. It was pointed out that the level of poverty and need is the biggest thing seen as the kids come in. Neighboring schools have been inviting people into the schools and have ambassadors. It was expressed that Career Days, Read Across America and events like this are the best advertising that can be done. School Committee Chairman Butler was thanked for his years of service, and his time and work was appreciated through some difficult years.

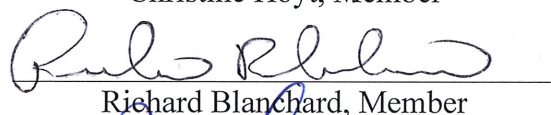
ADJOURNMENT: *Motion made by Member Blanchard to adjourn the meeting, second by Member Bush. Vote: Unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 8:11 p.m.*

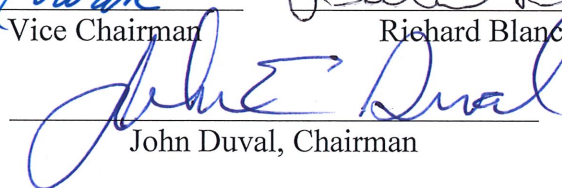
Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary


James Bush, Member


Christine Hoyt, Member


Joseph Nowak, Vice Chairman


Richard Blanchard, Member


John Duval, Chairman