

CITY OF BERLIN
New Hampshire

Minutes of Council School Budget Session of 3/06/2019
Council Conference Room
6:30 pm

Members:

Mayor Grenier
Councilor Theberge
Councilor Rozek
Councilor Gentili
Councilor Remillard
Councilor Higbee

City Staff:

James Wheeler, City Manager
Shelli Fortin, City Clerk
Patricia Chase, Finance Director

School Board, Administration and Staff:

Superintendent Corinne Cascadden
Administrator Bryan Lamirande
School Board Chairperson Nicole Plourde
School Board Member Lynn Moore
School Board Member Scott Losier
School Board Member Louise Valliere
School Board Member Denise Valerino
Tammy Fauteux, Middle School Principal
Julie King, CTE Director/Assistant Principal
Melanie McCoy, Hillside Elementary Principal
Jamie Welch, Teacher/BEA Union President
Susan Griffin, School Teacher Brown School

Mayor Grenier called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Mayor Grenier commended the School Board members in attendance for their dedication to the City's educational system.

Mayor Grenier invited Mrs. Plourde and Dr. Cascadden to present their FY20 school budget.

Mrs. Plourde started by reviewing the BPS enrollment figures which noted a steady decrease over the years. Class size in some grades are at maximum capacity. There are 42 Out of District students and 100 Home Schooled students. Mrs. Plourde then reviewed the tuition rates which demonstrated that although enrollment is decreasing the cost per student continues to increase.

A short review of the City's tax rate history followed and it was noted that the 2018-19 year experienced a zero increase from the previous year. The Board of Education request for the 2019-20 school year is \$19,962,989.

Mrs. Plourde reviewed the details of the expenditure request and indicated that the largest increase was for additional staffing and wage advancements. The additional request calls for an increase of \$505,034 for salaries and benefits. The additional staffing would be for: Assistant Principal at the High School, a Special Education Elementary School Teacher and a Special Education Pre School Teacher.

A discussion followed regarding students with special needs and the associated expenses. Mrs. Plourde noted that there are thirteen new students since January 1 all from other states and cities. Mr. Lamirande spoke on the projected number of special education students that will be passing through the school system and the impact that will have on the school budget.

Mrs. Plourde reviewed the capital improvement request and emphasized that the BMS rest rooms were a high priority.

The school proposed revenue budget is \$11,211,064. There was discussion regarding the reduction in NH Stabilization funding. Mr. Lamirande explained that with the current reductions the City will have experienced a loss of \$879,295.20.

Dr. Cascadden reviewed the Pre K to Age 21 placements. As of January 28, 2019 there are 42 placements.

Councilor Rozek asked Mayor Grenier about the status of the stabilization funding that communities have been struggling to reinstate. Mayor Grenier explained that it's still in House Finance and he's hopeful that funding will be approved at some point. Mayor Grenier also explained that other City departments were impacted by the loss of State Stabilization Funding and if funding is restored then the Council will review and determine the distribution of those proceeds. Mrs. Plourde expressed her concern for potential layoffs and/or reduction in programming.

School Board Member Valliere explained that next year the school will be up for accreditation and class size may be a reason for concern. Councilor Remillard noted that thirty students in a class seemed high.

Mrs. Plourde and Dr. Cascadden discussed their concerns in issuing pink slips on April 15. Mayor Grenier explained that although he's cautiously optimistic that funding will be restored financial appropriations cannot be authorized until the City receives confirmation from the State.

Mayor Grenier asked Mr. Lamirande to compile a couple of contingency plans.

Adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Patricia A. Chase