

REDDING BOARD OF EDUCATION
MEETING
February 11, 2010

Present: Barickman, Brey, Gaspar, Goldberg, Joyce-Kirk, Lewson, Miller
Administration: Cicchetti, Sullivan, Mas, Pierson Ugol, Wessman Huber, Martin, Wallin, Farrell,
Freeston
Others: 52 members of the staff & community

Dr. Gaspar called the February 11, 2010 meeting to order at 8:20 pm in the Cafeteria of the Redding Elementary School.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: move to approve the minutes of the February 2, 2010 meeting as corrected.

Miller, Lewson. Approved. Unanimous.

Correction: page 1, change Mr. Miller's comment to read as follows: "*Mr. Miller commented that at a previous meeting, the Board discussed many of the NABR proposals and found that many of the suggestions would be in violation of state laws and contracts, or would otherwise not save money.*"

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mary Lee Pompel, Black Rock Turnpike: urged the Board not to reduce the number of sections of the 4th grade.

Sara Sobel, Putman Hill Drive: stated that a 2% budget would not provide the kind of education desired by Redding residents, and could not support the elimination of the Woodshop program, Homework Center, summer curriculum work.

Steve Fitzgerald, Chapman Place: addressed the board with his positive experiences in the Woodshop Program at JRMS.

Mary Urban, Picketts Ridge Road: spoke in support of the JRMS Woodshop program as it builds self-esteem, teaches skills and working with others, and there are many parents in support of the program who could not be at the meeting to offer support.

Catherine Sheahan, Fire Hill Road: stressed the importance of Fine & Practical Arts and Enrichment Programs, as well as summer curriculum work. Urged board not to reduce class sizes, 23 or 24 are numbers too close to maximum.

Nick Simeonidis, Beck Road: urged the board members to think clearly and base their decision on experience and best judgment; carefully evaluate the suggestions and recommendations for cost savings; the economy was in worst shape last year and the budget was approved 2 to 1; and that the board of education has to meet their legal obligations. The Board of Education is the steward of the town-owned buildings and ground, they must maintain the facilities; continue what you have done to deliver a budget that takes all of the needs of the citizens into account.

Jeff Fligelman, Pocahontas Road: the Board has a responsibility to the current children and the children that follow; the schools are the soul of the community; supports the Enrichment Program, 4th grade sections and the Special Education paraprofessional position, he values these. He asked the board to give the public the opportunity to approve a budget that reflects their values.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Barickman thanked those who addressed the board. He stated that the Board of Education has to use their judgment to do what is right for the town of Redding.

Mr. Miller: commented that some difficult reductions were made last year, the result is that the school system is behind; the board must think of the years ahead and continue to make progress, not go backward.

Mr. Lewson encouraged all those present to remain active supporters of the budget and become actively involved in getting the budget approved.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PLAN

Mr. Barickman presented an overview of the proposed Capital Expenditure Plan. The Facilities Management Committee, made up of board members, staff and members of the community with expertise in the area, reviewed and analyzed the buildings and developed the Plan. The goal is to protect the health and safety of the students and staff, the quality of the instructional environment, and the long-term value of the town's assets by identifying, defining, and advocating for responsible facilities investment.

The Plan addressed several capital items that have been deferred over the past few years and those issues directly related to indoor air quality, health, safety and energy efficiency issues. The total package advocates capital expenditures in fiscal 2010-2011 of an estimated \$3,435,000. Also included is an estimate for \$700,000 for water treatment system replacement at both schools in fiscal 2012-2013. The Septic system at RES is also in need of replacement and was targeted for the summer of 2012 or 2013, but will be addressed separately from these recommendations.

The Committee is working on obtaining firmer estimates of the work to be done prior to submission to the Board of Finance. The Committee recommended approval by the Board of Education and submission to the Board of Finance for funding. Upon capital request approval, RFQ (request for quote) would be issued. The Committee plans that most of the work would be done during the summer months of 2010 or 2011, and school holidays.

The Chair allowed members of the public to comment on the proposal.

Ron Wendschuh, Deep Spring Road: commented that the work is worth doing now instead of over the next 20 years. He added comments regarding the NABR recommendations regarding the Town and education budget. He questioned the amount of public support for the recommendations. He attended both public meetings held by NABR to explain their recommendations. Both meetings were attended by only four members of the public. He urged to the board to consider their suggestions and evaluate them carefully, but submit a budget that is good for education and for the Town.

Gwen Denny, Wayside Lane: commented that she was pleased to see that the needs of the physical plant, especially the HVAC needs, were being addressed.

Jennifer Carello, Little River Lane: suggested that alternate fuel systems be considered for the schools and that the board needs to explain what the increase in budget will mean to the taxpayers, in simple dollar terms.

Mike D'Agostino, Glen Hill Road: a member of the Committee, Mr. D'Agostino commented that new heating methods are being explored; the Committee is consulting with experts in the field for the most energy efficient methods of heating/ventilation.

Catherine Sheahan, Fire Hill Road: commented that the plan is logical and clear, and presents the things that need to be done.

Board members discussed the importance of keeping the capital expenditures separate from the operating budget. The capital expenditures are long-term improvements and repairs to the facilities.

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education accept the Recommendations of the Facilities Management Sub-Committee to move forward with the 5-Year Capital Request Plan detailed in the documents presented and submit the plan to the Redding Board of Finance. Barickman, Goldberg. Approved. Unanimous.

2010-2011 OPERATING BUDGET

At the previous meeting, the board reviewed reductions to the proposed budget that brought the increase down to 4%. The administration was asked to submit further reductions to bring that increase down to 2%. Mrs. Sullivan presented a list, in priority order, of reductions for consideration. The reductions included;

1. Elimination of Woodshop Program, JRMS, \$109,665
2. Reduction of Enrichment Program, RES, \$73,000
3. Removal of request for increase in Social Worker position, RES \$13,000
4. Reduction of summer curriculum work, JRMS/RES, \$16,711
5. Reduction of SpEd contingency, %5,000
6. Reduction of instructional supplies, JRMS/RES, \$5,000
7. Reduction of maintenance supplies, \$9,980
8. Elimination of morning library paraprofessional, JRMS, \$3,184
9. Elimination of Homework Center, \$14,000
10. Reduction of 1 section (1.0 FTE) grade 4, RES, \$73,000
11. Reduction of Writing Specialist position by .4 FTE, JRMS, \$36,480
12. Elimination of 1.0 SpEd paraprofessional, \$35,000
13. Reduction of SpEd Contingency, \$5,000

Discussion of the reductions with the staff followed.

Woodshop Program: Mrs. Martin commented that the Woodshop Program at JRMS is one of the few, if only one, hands-on woodworking programs in schools in the area. Most of the programs have been discontinued and are replaced with more technology/engineering type courses. The facility is a dedicated area and could not be used for other classroom programs. The administration does not have a plan to replace the program; the loss of the program would be a reduction in Fine and Practical Arts offerings and may impact class sizes in other FPA classes. The Woodshop Program serves 100% of the students.

Enrichment Program: Mrs. Pierson Ugol reviewed the program and how it functions. The program serves 60% of the students.

Curriculum work: Mrs. Mas noted that curriculum work in Science and Social Studies would be retained, but other summer curriculum work would be eliminated.

The Chair allowed comments from the public.

Megan Valentine, Drummer Lane: spoke in support of the Woodshop Program and how much her daughter enjoyed the program. She added that the Enrichment Program at RES is fabulous.

Chris Nolan, Lonetown Road: commented that working with wood (Woodshop Program) is not dated. Education is about creating well rounded people. He also suggested that the board should consider a full day kindergarten.

Mary Urban, Picketts Ridge Road: spoke in support of the Woodshop Program at JRMS.

Dina Houser, Pheasant Ridge Road: spoke in support of the Enrichment and Woodshop Programs, and urged no reduction of the number of sections for 4th grade.

Name unclear, Fire Hill Road: spoke in support of 4th grade sections.

Mark Dale Lancaster, Mine Hill Road: support for the Woodshop program.

Sara Sobel, Putnam Hill Drive, support for Woodshop program.

Mike D'Agostino, Glen Hill Road: stressed the importance of consideration of the Capital Expenditures apart from the operating budget. He also supports the Woodshop program.

Jeff Fligelman, Pocahontas Road: support for the Fine and Practical Arts and their value to the school and community; and support for the Enrichment Program.

Jennifer Carello, Little River Road: commented that the Social Worker has been very effective.

Mary Brannan, Gallows Hill Road: suggested consideration of full day kindergarten.

Catherine Sheahan, Fire Hill Road: comments regarding the needs of the children academically and socially.

Brian Urban, Picketts Ridge Road: support for the Woodshop Program, and spoke of his experiences with what he learned from the program and instructor.

Ron Wendschuh, Deer Spring Road: suggested that before transitioning from a woodworking program to a more technological program, the high school be consulted. The former "shop" course was discontinued and replaced with the Cisco technology program that was not successful.

Board members continued a discussion of the budget. Several versions of reductions were discussed. Mr. Barickman suggested the board have a serious discussion of the full day kindergarten program soon, and if favorable, consider implementation mid-year.

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education accept a budget for fiscal 2010-2011 with increase of 3.9%, with reductions that include those listed on page 1, plus the elimination of the request for an increase in social worker position (\$13,000), and reduction in SpED contingency (\$5,000). Miller, Barickman. Motion failed. Voting for: Miller, Joyce-Kirk & Brey. Voting against: Lewson, Barickman, Goldberg & Gaspar.

Further discussion followed.

Motion: move that the Redding Board of Education accept a budget for fiscal 2010-2011 with an increase of 3.5%, with reductions that include those listed on page 1, plus the elimination of the request for an increase in social worker position (\$13,000), a reduction in SpED contingency (\$5,000), reduction of the Woodshop Program at JRMS to 0.5 FTE program for a \$50,000 reduction, and reduction of Enrichment Program by 0.5 FTE for a savings of \$30,000. Goldberg, Lewson. Approved. 4-3. Voting for: Joyce-Kirk, Goldberg, Lewson, Gaspar. Voting against: Barickman, Miller, Brey.

The board asked the JRMS administration to analyze the adjustments that would be needed to accomplish the reduction of the Woodshop Program and report to the board as soon as possible with the impact.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 12:05 am

Respectfully submitted,

Lewis Brey, Board of Education Secretary

Recorded by Mary Maday