

Rochester School Board
Finance Committee Minutes
School Department Board Room
January 5, 2017
6:45 PM

DRAFT

Members Present:

Mr. Matthew Pappas, Vice-Chair
Ms. Julie Brown
Mr. Thomas J. Jean
Mrs. Audrey Stevens
Mr. Robert Watson

Members Absent:

Mr. Paul Lynch
Mrs. Jennifer Bryant
Mrs. Karen Stokes

Also Present:

Mr. Michael Hopkins
Mr. Kyle Repucci
Ms. Linda Casey
Mr. Richard Bickford
Mrs. Christiane Allison
Ms. Nichole Gupta
Guests

The meeting was called to order at 6:56 p.m. with a quorum present.

Ms. Brown moved, second by Mr. Watson, to approve minutes of the December 1, 2016 Finance Committee meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial Update

Ms. Casey, Business Administrator provided a financial report as of December 31st. Ms. Casey reported that she is working closely with Mrs. Allison, Director of Student Services to encumber all costs associated with special education students. At this point there are no additional funds available within the Special Education Budget if other students were to come into the District. We are hoping that incoming and outgoing students will balance.

At this time there have been seventeen retirement inquiries which equals \$400,000 worth of buyouts; we have received three letters of intent to retire to date. If everything is spent within the budget we would be in a deficit of \$80,000. Ms. Casey stressed that she is working closely with Mrs. Allison and principals to ensure we will not have a deficit situation at end of year.

Ms. Casey reported that she has secured better pricing for natural gas and electricity. The natural gas pricing will not be in effect until May with a 21% decrease per therm. The electricity line should stay stable throughout the year and next year.

Financial Items from Personnel Committee – No action required.

Financial Items from Building Committee – No action required.

Public Comment – None

Other –

Mr. Bickford indicated that Patrick Jackson of SunRaise Investments would like provide an overview of the solar projects if the Committee is interested. Mr. Pappas and the Committee would welcome that presentation.

Mr. Jean inquired when the budget would be presented to the Board. Mr. Hopkins responded that a Special School Board meeting would be scheduled for FY 2018 Budget Presentation and review before the end of January.

Mr. Pappas handed out a letter (attached) that he and Mr. Lynch drafted to Senator James Gray, on behalf of the School Board, requesting that he work with Governor-Elect Sununu to reinstate School Building Aide in the next state budget. Another letter would go to all state reps from Rochester as well as Governor Sununu. Mr. Pappas asked for feedback from the Committee as this letter would need to go before the full

Board for review and approval. Discussion was held regarding the importance of bringing this request forward to Senator Gray and NH Representatives.

Mrs. Stevens moved, second by Ms. Brown, to recommend the Board approve the “draft” letter to Senator Gray regarding School Building Aide reinstatement; and authorize submission of the letter as approved to the Senator, Governor, and Rochester House representatives. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

Mr. Jean moved, second by Mrs. Stevens, to adjourn the meeting at 7:06 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mr. Matthew Pappas, Vice-Chair

January 5, 2017

Senator James Gray
NH State House, Room 302
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Senator Gray,

On behalf of the Rochester School Board, I respectfully request that you work with Governor Sununu to reinstate School Building Aid in the next state budget.

As you know, several years ago, the legislature and governor agreed to remove School Building Aid from the state budget. This decision was made at a time when the State of New Hampshire was facing the most severe economic recession in nearly 75 years. Now that the state is in much better financial footing, we ask that you work diligently with the Governor and your colleagues in the Senate and the House, on behalf of your constituents to restore the School Building Aid line item back into the state budget.

The entire cost of building the new East Rochester School was borne by the city of Rochester. While that school was in dire need of replacement, it was a priority for the School Board and City Council to focus on constructing a new, modern, state-of-the-art facility in which our students can learn. While we made that project fit within our budgetary constraints, there are a number of other essential school projects rising within our community which require our attention. The School Board has made it clear to the City Council that construction of a new Creteau Center, the elimination of modular classrooms and compliance with the Americans with Disability Act are priority projects for the city of Rochester. Each of these are costly projects and restoration of School Building Aid in the state budget will allow the city to complete these projects in a timely fashion and make it affordable for our community.

Governor Hassan announced nearly a year ago that there was a \$62 million surplus for the fiscal year 2015, and 2016 is looking to see similar figures. Governor Sununu has repeatedly supported the restoration of School Building Aid in the state budget during the 2016 campaign. The time has come to reinstate the school building aid to cities and towns.

As a member of the Rochester City Council and state legislature, you have seen and voted for the legislature to push millions of dollars in costs from the state level to local level. This stress on local revenues has had significant impact on the City of Rochester from the downshifting retirement costs, elimination of building aid and recent cuts in (and eventual elimination) of stabilization funds.

This recent election season saw much rhetoric on the issue of education. Investment in our schools is a benefit to our community. It not only attracts new residents to our city but it helps build a trained, educated workforce. We ask that you support Rochester by introducing legislation that re-establishes the School Building Aid to its original formula prior to its

elimination in (2010). This would provide vital support to local school districts to ensure all children in the state learn in a modern, safe and adequate school building in their community.

We are hopeful that your efforts will provide relief for property owners and positively impact learners at all levels in our community.

Thank you for your consideration and assistance with this important issue.

Sincerely,

Paul Lynch, Chair
Rochester School Board