

**Board of Education Special Meeting**

July 31, 2018 7:00 PM

PPMS Library

**1. Call to Order**

Sean Nugent; BOE Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:10PM. Other members present: Deborah Burke-Grabarek, Tom Turner, Ed Gauthier, Dan Harris and Charles Raymond. Cindy Luty was absent. Also present: Dr. Seitsinger; Superintendent, John Spang; Director of Finance, and Gloria Homiski; Recording Secretary.

**2. Public Comment**

Sean Nugent addressed the BOE and the audience stating that the purpose of this meeting would be to focus on proposed FY19 Budget Reductions.

Andy Depta: Stated that he would be recording the meeting.

Jill Keith: Asked for the minimum budget requirement figures for 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019. Sean Nugent stated that he would get that information to her.

Susan Strader: She hopes that the budget will not go to MBR. She hopes the community will not continue to hold grudges against previous decisions of other board members or Superintendents. She knows that misinformation is out in the public and hopes that the BOE can rebut that. The Town re-evaluation and Covanta project impacted the mil rate. The BOE budget alone did not cause the mil increase. PK-8 students will be impacted. The correct information needs to reach the public.

Jill Keith: She stated that she does not hold grudges or have a personal vendetta. The community does understand what is going on and they want their opinions heard.

Jill Charron: She thanked the Board, Dr, Seitsinger, and John Spang for all of their hard work. She trusts that they all have the best interests of Preston kids at heart.

**3. FY19 Proposed Budget Adjustments Discussion**

Sean Nugent stated that the Board failed to educate the community. He hopes to do so now while reviewing the \$215,000.00 reduction on the table. He clarified a few things before reviewing the cuts.

1. Some community members have indicated that they believe the Superintendent is receiving an 8% raise. That is not true at all. Dr. Seitsinger's salary was pro-rated last year due to his start date in Preston. At the time of his hire, CABE prepared a study citing that Preston should hire a full time rather than part-time Superintendent. They also did a salary assessment at that time and stated that Preston's Superintendent is paid at the low end of that scale.
2. Once a referendum date is set, educational members and groups are limited in promoting the budget or answering questions.
3. Questions have come up regarding the Early Retirement Incentive Program. This is not something that is offered annually. Each time it was offered, a cost savings assessment was completed beforehand. Please see the attached summary from John Spang. In 2018-2019, one more

payment is going out to one more retired teacher. No other Early Retirement Plan is currently in the works.

4. NFA tuition is always paid in arrears. The invoice does not reflect students currently enrolled, but those who were enrolled during the previous year.

Dr. Seitsinger addressed the Board and the audience, stating that he has been, and continues to be, available to the community to answer any and all questions and concerns. He explained that a Strategic Plan was created to announce coming changes and development plans. The District definitely needs at least a part time social worker. Dr. Seitsinger has set up a Social Emotional Learning Team (SELT) that includes school psychologists, nurses, teachers, administrators and once approved, social workers. The purpose of this Team is to assure the well-being of all students and their families. In the absence of a social worker, in the immediate future, Dr. Seitsinger will look for guidance from Dr. Carmela Smith; Director of Special Education, who holds an MSW.

Dr. Seitsinger shared the thoughts of Cindy Luty who was unable to attend the meeting. Cindy is extremely passionate about the PK Program and worries that we are taking significant steps backwards. Forty states currently have Universal PreK. Dr. Seitsinger implemented a PreK Design Team. The Team will examine data and work to ensure that our program meets national standards.

Dr. Seitsinger shared the following pertinent facts:

\*ACCEPTABLE RISKS lead to substantial reductions in FY19 line items.

\*6 of 10 major areas of the budget are lower next year than this year.

\*The current budget increase is 1.2% which is well below the cost of living.

\*Despite there being over 3 million dollars in the fund balance, we should not perpetually rely on it.

\*The list of cuts to be presented have been chosen because they will have the least direct impact on the quality of educational for our students. The deeper the cuts, the greater disruption to educating Preston students.

\*Time to look at partnerships with other Towns and Districts.

\*We do not have an abnormally high per pupil cost at \$16,739. According to the Net Current Expenditure Per Pupil (NCEP) Preston is ranked 92 out of 169.

\*Approximately \$170,000 of the budget increase is due to an increase in NFA tuition. This means, this one item, is not covered by our current increase.

Dr. Seitsinger stated that lost in this budget debate is the fact that the district is not the cause of a substantial increase in the municipal budget. The reevaluation and Covanta are the leading factors. In the end the town will get what they are willing to support. He hopes that decades of effort to create an exceptional learning environment will not be dismantled.

Dr. Seitsinger shared a strawman set of options for the Board to review, accept, or modify. The BOE reviewed and discussed the removal of the social worker position from the budget, and the possibility of entering into a fee based PK Program. Free and reduced lunch applications would be used to help set fee standards for the program. Other options included filling a retired RN position with an LPN, as well as eliminating a .5 paraeducator. The Board also discussed the elimination of K-8 late buses,

and reductions in technology purchases, out of district special education tuition, student books/supplies and the cafeteria subsidy.

Moved, to accept the working reduction document totally \$215,000.00 as presented by the Superintendent which includes a fee based PK Program (TBD: approximately 75.00/week/student) with the following modification: reinstate late buses and reduce the cafeteria subsidy by an additional \$4320.00. Gauthier/Harris. Unanimous. Motion Carries.

Dr. Seitsinger stated that although he is committed to the importance of everything on the reduction list, he is trying to listen to the voices of the community. He believes that the SELT Team as well as the PK Design Team will help bring some of these items to light in the near future. They will not be set aside.

#### 5. Public Comment

Jill Charron: She knew of the RN opening but worries about an LPN filling the position. She also agrees with having a fee based PK program.

Bob Congdon: He suggested that the Board put the unused stipend money towards the school books that were cut.

Andy Depta: He suggested that IDEA money would soon be available to our Birth to 3 population. Sean Nugent explained that this grant is already implemented into our budget.

Jill Keith: She commended the BOE on their discussion and approach to reductions. Preston needs to focus on data and research, and on the strengths of our teachers - not on budget dollars. She appreciated the open dialogue with the taxpayers.

#### 6. Adjournment

Moved, to adjourn the meeting at 8:55PM. Burke-Grabarek/Turner. Unanimous. Motion Carries.

Handout:

Teacher Earlier Retirement Incentive Programs

| Retiring Teacher | Year      | ERIP           | Ensuing Salary <u>Avoided</u> | Replacement Salary <u>Paid</u> | Salary Savings  |                   | Total           |
|------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
|                  |           |                |                               |                                | FY 17           | FY18              |                 |
| A                | 6/30/2016 | 30,000         | 88,810                        | 49,145                         | -39,665         | -39,753           | -79,418         |
| B                | 6/30/2016 | 30,000         | 80,398                        | 56,045                         | -24,353         | -22,784           | -47,137         |
| C                | 6/30/2016 | 30,000         | 80,398                        | 48,533                         | -31,865         | -31,815           | -63,680         |
| D                | 6/30/2017 | 20,000 *       | 81,845                        |                                |                 | -51,845           | -51,845         |
| <b>Total</b>     |           | <u>110,000</u> |                               |                                |                 |                   | <u>-242,080</u> |
|                  |           |                |                               |                                | 110,000         | less ERIPs        |                 |
|                  |           |                |                               |                                | <u>-132,080</u> | Budget Reductions |                 |
|                  |           |                |                               |                                | 120%            | ROI               |                 |

\* Final payment \$10,000 budgeted in 2018-19