

Ashford Board of Education
Special Meeting Minutes – March 28, 2019
7:00 pm
Ashford School District Office Conference Room

Note: Per CGS 10-218, Board of Education Meeting Minutes are provided in a draft format within 48 hours of the date the meeting was held. With the exceptions of motions and votes recorded, the minutes are unofficial until they have been read and approved by a majority vote by the Board. Should edits be necessary, they will be made at a regularly scheduled meeting, noted in the meeting minutes, and so voted upon.

Call to Order

Chair John Lippert called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm. Present were members Jane Urban, John Calarese, Kay Warren and Shannon Gamache. Also in attendance were Superintendent James Longo, Director of Pupil Personnel Cindy Ford, Principal Troy Hopkins, Asst. Principal Garrett Dukette, Business Manager Lisa Dyer and recording secretary Jen Barsaleau. Unable to attend were board members Lisa Donegan and Marian Matthews. Audience present: Karen Zulick, Christine Abikoff, Cheryl Baker, Charles Funk, Jen Lindsay, Christine Davis, Kimberley Kouatly, Rebecca Haeger and Christina Siggins.

Chair John Lippert welcomed all present, noting that the purpose of this special meeting is dedicated only to identifying and making reductions of \$150,000 to the Board of Education's proposed FY 20 budget. He went on to note that the administration has prepared a list of potential line items for reduction which will be reviewed, however, he also stated that the board needs to consider reduction of staff such as a teacher, administrator or mental health professional and that it's the right thing to do.

Opportunity for Public Comment

Mr. Lippert stated that public comment would not be limited to this opportunity, he will periodically ask for audience comments throughout the meeting.

- Rebecca Haeger stated her appreciation for being able to address any concerns after hearing what is discussed during the worksession.
- Kim Kouatly reminded the board that outsourcing of transportation and regionalizing with Willington for the lower grades have been discussed in the past.

FY 20 Budget Worksession

The worksession began with a review and discussion of the document titled "Options for Reductions to the 2019-2020 BOE Budget."

Special Education

All listed lines in relation to special education reductions were discussed including paraeducators (01-1200-112-20000); medical/dental insurance (01-1200-2100-20000); speech outsourced (01-2150-340-20000), PT outsourced and behavior therapy outsourced (01-2190-340-20000). Cindy Ford was asked to address these reductions.

- It was necessary to hire 2 paraeducators during this school year based on student need. Since that time, one person has resigned and one has informed her that they will not be returning next school year. This coupled with changes to student enrollment make filling these positions unnecessary at this time. Mrs. Ford noted that special education support needs could change at any time. These reductions total \$57,762.
- The proposed 2% increase for speech and PT outsourced are eliminated. These reductions total \$2,401.
- Mrs. Ford stated that the currently contracted provider of behavior therapy services would be reduced to reflect a change of direction in the approach to such services. We currently have two school psychologists and the school counselor that comprise a mental health team. This team has been consulted about the changes being considered and that team feels comfortable and confident in this approach. Mrs. Ford also stated that she is always looking at trying to share services with other area districts. It is her hope to try to partner with another district to share this type of service. The currently contracted behavior therapy consultant will still be working with our district, just not as often.

Jane Urban suggested another option to the amount of the behavior therapy reduction. She suggested it be \$15,000 and that it remain a contracted service, and not become a staff position. Other members of the board agreed, and the reduction to this line will be \$31,900.

Mr. Lippert asked for any audience comment or if there were any questions for Mrs. Ford?

- Mrs. Kouatly asked Mrs. Ford to explain a comment she made about the special education budget being “flagged?” Mrs. Ford responded that it refers to a state requirement known as Maintenance of Effort, or MOE. The state requires that special education expenditures not be significantly less from one year to the next to ensure students are receiving everything they need. As long as the reasons for a reduction in MOE are documented, the state will be satisfied with this change.
- Cheryl Baker asked what the impact would be from last year to this year’s special education budget? Mrs. Ford did not have that answer readily available, but left the room and returned noting the difference was a net change of \$6,000.

Math Intervention (01-1200-111-20001)

Discussion moved onto postponing the Math Intervention position. There was an assumption that once the BOE had to make reductions, that this new position would be removed from the budget.

Dr. Longo reminded the board that this was discussed at a summer retreat meeting in reference to the goal of improving test scores. Mr. Hopkins reported that scores in middle grades have declined since the departure of the math interventionist that we had a few years ago. Students will be better served with an interventionist and is an important position to have. Board members Jane Urban and Kay Warren support keeping the position in this budget. Member Shannon Gamache inquired about reducing one Spanish position as she feels the math is more important. After discussion, all members wished to keep the math intervention position in the budget.

Class Trip Transportation (01-2790-110-10000)

Jane Urban said she was not in favor of cutting all funding for field trips. Discussion followed concerning how much the students look forward to field trips, the number of trips per year and the cost to families if they need to pay more for trips. John Calarese inquired of Mr. Funk in the audience if the Ashford Business Association might sponsor some of the school field trips? Mr. Funk and Mrs. Davis are both members and felt it was possible. It was agreed that this line would be reduced by \$6,000.

Curriculum Development (01-2210-151-10000)

Funds from this line go to payment of wages paid to teachers to work on curriculum revision in the summer. Mr. Dukette gave an update of the progress to date on curriculum revision. This line will be reduced by \$5,000 and grant funds will be used for this purpose.

Professional Development Regular Education (01-1000-330-10001)

After discussion of professional development contractual obligations and application of Title II grant funds for this purpose this line was reduced by \$5,000.

BOE Expenses (01-2310-600-1000)

This line will be decreased by \$2,000.

Elementary Instructional/General Supplies (01-1000-610-10000)

Middle School Instructional/General Supplies (01-1001-610-10000)

There was much discussion of reductions to these lines and the effect on classroom supplies. It was agreed to reduce elementary supplies by \$4,000 and middle school supplies by \$5,000.

Elementary and Middle School Texts, Periodicals and Workbooks

Funds in these five lines represent subscriptions such as Scholastic News, Time for Kids, etc. and are supplemental materials that are good to have, but are not required. The total of these reductions equal \$7,288.

After School Program

None of the board members present wished to make any changes to the After School program. It is a unique program for students and their families and it is important to keep in tact.

Mr. Lippert and the board then reviewed a second list of reductions on the document titled “Alternative Budget Reductions.” The first two items on the list, Class Trip Transportation and Behavior Therapy Outsourced were already addressed.

Flooring (01-2600-430-10006)

Dr. Longo explained that as part of summer maintenance, we budget to remove carpeting in classrooms and replace with tile flooring. It was agreed to reduce \$3,000 from this line

General Maintenance and Repairs (01-2600-430-10003)

The types of repairs that fall under this line were discussed. Dr. Longo felt it would be a great risk to reduce this line given the age of the building and emergencies happen. After discussion, it was agreed to reduce this line by \$5,000.

Technology Equipment (01-2230-730-10003)

Technology Equipment Maintenance (01-2580-432-1000)

After brief discussion, it was agreed to reduce the equipment line by \$2,000 and the maintenance line by \$1,000.

Paraeducators (01-1200-112-20000)

Kay Warren asked what the cost savings would be if one paraeducator was reduced to half-time position? There was brief discussion. No reduction was made to this line.

Mr. Lippert asked for any comment from the audience.

- AEA co-president Jen Lindsay addressed health insurance. Members of the AEA are surveyed for their intent to participate in the medical plan. She will re-survey the membership to see if there might be any changes and perhaps some savings in the medical insurance line.
- Ms. Baker mentioned that some dental insurance cost savings may be possible as a new plan has been offered to the Town and BOE. More details are coming.
- Ms. Baker asked about the hiring of a school counselor that had not been part of the budget request for FY 19. Mr. Lippert noted that process was a learning experience for the board. Mr. Hopkins identified several reasons that made it evident this position was greatly needed. Upon receipt of the resignation of a classroom teacher, the choice was made to hire a counselor.
- Ms. Baker asked why the school buys MacBook Pro laptop and not MacBook Air? Dr. Longo explained that we are not purchasing the Pro's any longer, we use MacBooks as they are far more durable for student use. She also asked if a para position could be shared with another district?
- Mrs. Kouatly noted that a math interventionist would not just be helping with struggling students but older students who are not being challenged enough in math.
- Mr. Funk noted that he was in attendance tonight to see what the process would be followed to apply the budget reductions. He further expressed appreciation for the efforts being made by everyone present.

The board took a brief recess at 8:53pm. The meeting resumed at 9:01pm.

Dr. Longo noted that approximately \$14,000 of REAP Grant funding could be used towards the salary of the new math interventionist position and this would bring the total budget reductions to \$150,000.

Discussion followed. Members of the board identified areas that were reduced this evening that are to take priority in terms of restoration to the FY 20 budget should there be an opportunity to do so. They are:

- Curriculum Development - \$5,000
- Class Trip Transportation - \$6,000
- Elementary and Middle School Supplies - \$9,000
- Elementary and Middle School Texts, Periodicals and Workbooks - \$7,288
- Technology Equipment and Technology Equipment Maintenance - \$3,000

Motion made by Kay Warren to reduce \$150,000 from the FY 20 Ashford School budget by the amounts and line items identified in this worksession. It is further moved that the priority items identified in this meeting will be the first to be restored if there is opportunity to do so. Motion seconded by Jane Urban and carried unanimously.

Motion made by John Calarese to adjourn the meeting (9:20pm). Motion seconded by Kay Warren and carried unanimously.

Recorded by:

Jennifer Barsaleau
Recording Secretary

Options for Reductions to the 2019-2020 BOE Budget
Target: \$150,000 in Reductions

The Board of Finance cut the Board of Education proposed budget by \$150,000 at their March 21st meeting. Provided below is a list of possible reductions the BOE can choose from. This list is provided as a starting point to accompany any additional BOE proposed reductions to reach the target of \$150,000 in total.

This list of reductions is spread across the entire budget, affecting all grades and all students. These cuts are not desirable, they result in fewer supplies, no funded field trips, fewer opportunities for professional development, fewer consumable supplies or classroom furniture or equipment, no paid opportunities to work on curriculum, and less classroom para support. We will be unable to make routine repairs and improvements on the facility, or continue our annual schedule of improvements. We will not be able to purchase computers or maintain our one-to-one program in the middle school.

No matter which cuts are chosen, this reduced budget puts the brakes on several years of gradual and steady school improvement. Hopefully, our exceptional administration and exemplary staff will find ways to overcome this devastating budget reduction, and keep our school functioning at a high level.

Account # and Name	Original Proposal	Suggested Reduction With Notations	Remaining Amount
Certified Staff 01-1200-111-20001	Add .5 math Interventionist \$ 22,557	Postpone hiring a year (\$ 22,257)	\$ 0
Special Education Paraeducators 01-1200-112-20000	Maintain current staff levels \$ 518,092	Do not replace 2 who have announced leaving (\$50,062)	\$ 468,030
Medical Dental Special Ed. 01-1200-210-20000	\$ 366,153	Paraeducator (\$7,700)	\$358,453
Class Trip Transportation 01-2790-110-10000	\$12,456	Trips will have to be pay as you go (\$6,000)	\$ 6,456
Curriculum Development 01-2210-151-10000	Curriculum Revision Wages for Certified Staff \$5,000	Revise curriculum by other means (\$5,000)	\$ 0
Professional Development Regular Ed 01-1000-330-10001	\$ 5,000	Meet contractual obligations through Title II Grant (\$ 5,000)	\$ 0
Speech Outsourced 01-2150-340-20000	\$ 77,219	Reduce 2% (\$1,514)	\$ 75,705
PT Outsourced 01-2190-340-20000	\$45,254	Reduce 2% (\$ 887)	\$ 44,367
Behavior Therapy Outsourced 01-2190-340-20000	\$ 46,930	Will hire consultant as needed (\$26,930)	\$20,000

BOE Expenses 01-2310-600-10000	\$ 2,724	Limit CABA Conference Attendance (\$2,000)	\$ 724
Elementary Instructional/ General Supplies 01-1000-610-10000	\$ 9,000	Eliminate purchase of consumable supplies in the classroom (\$6,750)	\$ 2,250
Middle School Instructional/ General Supplies 01-1001-610-10000	\$ 10,550	Eliminate purchase of consumable supplies in the classroom (\$8,750)	\$ 1,800
Elementary Texts 01-1000-640-10000	\$ 1,613	(\$ 1,613)	\$ 0
Elementary Periodicals 01-1000-640-10001	\$ 1,560	(\$ 1,560)	\$ 0
Elementary Workbooks 01-1000-640-10003	\$ 2,046	(\$ 2,046)	\$ 0
Middle School Periodicals 01-1001-640-10001	\$ 500	(\$ 500)	\$ 0
Middle School Workbooks 01-91001-640-10003	\$ 1,569	(\$ 1,569)	\$ 0
After School Program 01-2290-151-10000	\$7,566	Reduce number of after school clubs offered from 6 per Trimester to 5 (\$1,431)	\$ 6,135

Alternative Budget Reductions

Here are some deeper cuts that could be used to restore some of the cuts listed on the options page by replacing the comparable line on the original reduction sheet, thus freeing up to \$51,430 that could be restored to other lines of your choice.

These cuts put us in a position to hope that:

- Additional \$5,000: That parents can fund their child's field trips (except for hardship)
- Additional \$10,000: We do not need additional behavioral interventions
- Additional \$5,000: We do not have any substantial equipment failures
- Additional \$2,000: And we do not require any computer hardware replacements
- Additional \$3,232: Cancel all scheduled flooring updates for the year
- Additional \$1,168: Two days of late bus is adequate
- Additional \$25,030: Paraeducator needs do not increase

Please let me know if you would like to apply any of these additional deductions, or if you have alternatives that you would like us to cost out for you.

Account # and Name	Original Proposal	Reduction and Explanation	Amount Remaining
Class Trip Transportation 01-2790-110-10000	\$12,456	Trips will have to be pay as you go (\$10,000)	\$ 2,456
Behavior Therapy Outsourced 01-2190-340-20000	\$ 46,930	Will hire consultant as needed or seek alternative solution (\$36,930)	\$10,000
General Maintenance and Repairs 01-2600-430-10003	\$20,000	Repair emergencies only (\$5,000)	\$15,000
Technology Equipment 01-2230-730-10003	\$3,000	(\$2,000)	\$1,000
Technology Equipment Maint. 01-2580-432-1000	\$ 3,000	More in house repairs and postpone some (\$1,000)	\$2,000
Flooring 01-2600-430-10006	\$ 6,232	Postpone scheduled repairs (\$ 3,232)	\$3,000
Late Bus Transportation 01-2790-110-10002	\$3,503	Cut two days late bus reducing to Tues. and Wed. only (\$1,168)	\$ 2,335
Paraeducators 01-1200-112-20000	\$468,030	Reduction of one full time paraeducator	\$443,000

3/28/19

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REAR 15,619
Line Items 134,381

SPEL $50 + 7 + 1 + 1 + 32 = 92k$

* Curr Dev	5	96
PD	5	101
* Trip buses	6	107
BOE	2	109
* Supplies	9	118
* Books, periodicals	7	125
Flooring	3	128
Gen Maintenance	5	133
* Tech	3	136
Cover 1/2 of Math, Ict, REAR grant	13	150