

MANCHESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BUDGET WORKSHOP

Wednesday, June 4, 2008

Manchester High School  
Freshman Center  
Presentation Room  
6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Crockett, Edwards, Hackett, Moran, Pattacini, Rizzo, Stafford

**ALSO PRESENT:** Superintendent of Schools Ouellette, Assistant to the  
Superintendent of Finance & Management Brooks,  
Director of Student Support Services, Tait

**ABSENT:** Marcano, Small-Miller

A. Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Hackett led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Hackett announced that the Special Board of Education meeting that was to follow the Workshop to adopt the Budget had been postponed until Thursday, June 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. and would be held in the Presentation Room at Manchester High School. A sign had been posted on the door to that effect.

B. MINUTES

Ms. Hackett called for a Motion to approve the Budget Workshop Minutes of May 21, 2008.

MOTION: Stafford/Edwards s.v. The Manchester Board of Education unanimously approved the Minutes, as printed. 7/0/0.

C. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Nicole Massey, 25 Ridgewood Street, had a daughter who was a Head Start student in her last year. They live in the Verplanck District and had been notified they were not doing a full day Kindergarten Program. This was unfortunate as her daughter had become used to the full day. Nicole was a single Mom who goes to school and also works - her internship starts next year. Day care was not affordable and she had become dependent on the School Support System. She was trying to figure out what to do. There were not a lot of Day Care places in her area - she believed only two - one was very expensive and the other one which she did not feel comfortable sending her daughter to.

Nicole brought this to the Board with the belief that there were probably a lot of other parents in a similar situation. She did not know what to do - she did not have a choice. There were only two schools in Manchester that were not full day Kindergarten, and that

was something they really needed. Manchester was having a lot of issues when it came to raising children the right way and she thought parents needed to stick together and give the children what they needed, in all schools, not just a few.

Dr. Ouellette corrected Nicole's statement - there were actually six schools in district that did not have full-day Kindergarten.

Mr. David Moloney, 114 Thayer Road asked the Board to reconsider their decision to cut one of the Social Studies positions at the High School. With the NEASC Accreditation Visit coming up he wanted to be able to report to the Visiting Team that they had kept class sizes as low as possible. By cutting this one staff member they were looking at increases in class sizes across the Board in Social Studies. He knew staff was needed to raise the CAP scores in Math and English but in Social Studies they were responsible for 25% of the CAP scores in town (the writing part). They had also been assigned two other graduation tasks by the Board, i.e., the Service Learning project and the History Day project. So, the Department's feeling in Social Studies was that next year they would basically have more tasks but less staff. They would like the Board to reconsider this cutback.

Kathleen Kiley, 6 Amherst Drive, made the suggestion that some form of Meditation be considered as part of the Curriculum from Grades 1-12 and, if that were impossible, to at least do it from Grades 6-12. She thought everybody would benefit from this. There were a lot of children coming from functional families so it went into alternative care. She thought another portion could be emotional development classes; not just anger management, but emotional development connecting from the inner to the outer being.

Mr. Barbara O'Brien, 22 Barnewood Road, had four children who were fourth generation residents in Manchester and the town was important to her. She urged that when the Board was looking at goals and improvement plan for the town, and making decisions about what was important to retain and what would be cut that they look at those suggestions as recommendations to support what would work and be effective. Obviously important decisions had to be made and issues such as All Day Kindergarten, which research had shown was important. She hoped the Board might be persuaded to adjust a couple of their goals, e.g., Equity, Achievement Gap, etc.

Ms. O'Brien referred to comments she had heard "they were going to leave it to the experts" She again urged that as Board members they would work side by side with the Administration not for what was important to the elected officials, who were working on the Board in an official capacity and might not have the same interest as the community. That was totally different than for folks who chose to live and work in Manchester.

#### D. OPENING REMARKS

There were no opening remarks.

#### E. BUDGET DISCUSSION

Ms. Hackett handed the meeting over to Dr. Ouellette who explained that, unfortunately, there were timing restraints that evening as Dr. Richardson was covering for Ms. Brooks and her at a Verplanck PTA meeting in order to discuss the Highland Park Referendum. Dr. Richardson was responding to a request from the previous session for an average class size, with the reductions and the alternative plan of moving the Bentley Program to the K-Wing.

Unfortunately, Mr. O'Donnell had a conflict and he would also have to leave the meeting shortly.

Dr. Richardson informed she would present a K-12 overview of the enrollment class sizes and they were looking at projection from where they currently were moving forward to the rollout for September 1<sup>st</sup>. Board members had been given copies of the latest report from the New England School Development Council, listing Enrollment Projections in their agenda packets.

Dr. Ouellette interjected that the NESDEC document in the Board's packets revealed there was a difference of only twenty-five students from 2006-2007, and this was additional information for them which Ms. Brooks had provided out the previous week.

Dr. Richardson confirmed she was reviewing the numbers to give the Board a feel for where they were at. All Day Kindergarten was nineteen and roughly all of 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grades ranged between nineteen and twenty students. So an average class size from full day Kindergarten of the schools that offered it, to 6<sup>th</sup> Grade, had roughly nineteen to twenty students on average.

Getting to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades there was a range of twenty to twenty-two students and that would be included in looking at the Math, English, Science and Social Studies subjects, and the same thing for the High School with a little larger classes. Speaking with the Principals they were looking at Math, English, Science and Social Studies, twenty-five to twenty-eight students. It should be kept in mind that the students had given their requests which had been fed into the computer and they were looking at placements then that allowed the schedule to be printed and created the exact enrollment figures. We were early for that in being able to project. For discussion purposes, we were looking at twenty-five to twenty-eight.

Dr. Richardson believed there was a policy somewhere about not going over that number. For High School around twenty-six in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grades and they would like to be around twenty-four to twenty-five students at the elementary levels.

Dr. Ouellette pointed out in some cases there could be some exceptions to the case. In 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades with some of their accelerated courses, maybe more than the twenty-twenty-one that had been indicated at Middle level, e.g., Algebra I.

Dr. Richardson agreed with this. There were also some types of remedial services somewhere around eighteen to support some skilled development.

Ms. Hackett clarified that the numbers just shared reflected the current state and Dr. Richardson said they would be rolling to the next grade, as best we knew, as of May 1, without people coming in September.

Dr. Richardson stated they had Kindergarten enrollment already and that was an estimated projection. The Kindergarten number would be the first grade projected.

Mr. Edwards wanted to know what the Social Studies position would do to our class sizes and Dr. Richardson responded that would probably push it closer to the twenty-eight number talked about, as opposed to twenty-five.

Mr. Rizzo reflected that the number we were aiming for at the elementary schools when it was referenced was twenty-five students. He thought that while we may have some classes with twenty-five students, by and large, based on the May 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment data, most of our classrooms had less than twenty. He did not want the community to think that we had twenty-five children in all of our classrooms. It had been suggested to him by a retired principal that if we kept our class sizes in Kindergarten in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades, below twenty, if at all possible, we could then in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades have higher numbers. He made the point that we if we were going to shoot for twenty-five children in every elementary classroom we would probably be able to collapse quite a few classes. That was not, obviously, a goal we would want to reach.

Dr. Ouellette pointed out that Dr. Richardson was talking about some of the contractual limits in the teacher's contract. She believed it was twenty-four or less.

Dr. Richardson said the average class size was nineteen for 1<sup>st</sup> grade, Kindergarten Full Day 19 and then 20 for the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. They were trying to preserve grades Kindergarten Full Day through 6<sup>th</sup> grade and research showed that the smaller the class sizes the more teacher/student interaction and instruction improved. That was why they were markedly different.

Mr. Rizzo said that the class sizes were probably the Board's last line of defense whenever they looked at cutting the budget. He thought that during his tenure on the Board they had done a tremendous job with the numbers getting better, more manageable for our staff, the type of student we had, and also the Curriculum. He would not want us to take a backward step on this.

Ms. Hackett wanted to know when we would have the most accurate picture of class sizes in the Social Studies Department. Dr. Richardson said it was generally after the first or second day of school opening. There could be an influx of students coming in during the summer and generally that was pretty accurate. Principals usually gravitated towards attendance at that time and then took a look at class sizes so things balanced out. It was a good check and balance system against the schedule.

Dr. Ouellette reminded that Dr. Richardson had run some projections with Mr. Stetson with regards to Social Studies.

Mr. Pattacini wanted to know if Dr. Richardson could provide a delta between what it was today and what it would be minus the one Social Studies staff. Dr. Richardson said it had been pretty stable the last number of years. That was why she ranged 7th-12th grades where it fluctuated a little more. Basically, they were fairly in the average.

Mr. Pattacini wanted specifically to know for the Social Studies Department the number of staff today, i.e., if the number of students were divided by the number of staff. Dr. Richardson disagreed – they looked at specific classes. Mr. Pataccini asked how many staff was in the Social Studies Department today at the High School and Ms. Brooks stated there were currently nineteen.

Mr. O'Donnell talked about the alternative to put the Bentley Program in the K-Wing outlining some of the challenges and pluses that might come about in using the program. He had listened to all the conversations between Board members throughout the Budget Workshops recognizing that this had never been the primary plan to be put forward. The Board had angst over moving students back to the High School.

Dr. Ouellette corrected Mr. O'Donnell – it had always been the primary plan from the data she had reviewed back in 2002 – it started with the All Schools' Plan. There was documentation about this in specific minutes and approval had been given.

Mr. O'Donnell agreed with Dr. Ouellette but pointed out he had not been privy to that information prior to the current year.

Mr. O'Donnell understood they were in a difficult set of circumstances but guaranteed, as Principal of the High School, that if the move were to be made they would do everything in their power to ensure the students served by the program would be served as well as possible. There were challenges and constraints - he listed a few of these - and he had thought them through.

Mr. Stafford reiterated the concerns he had voiced at two previous Budget Workshops and those remained with him. He did not want the students placed in a risky environment and we lived in a town where there were buildings, the Grange being one that if the Board of Directors could work it through with the Planning and Zoning, would allow the students to have their own school. The Board had constantly discussed them having their own school and we needed to do that. He wanted to see them do well. To move them when we were about to go through the NEAC Accreditation process would not be serving all of our students well.

Mr. Stafford emphasized that next year, at this time, having moved the children to the High School, we were going to have issues. If it were the Middle School he would have not have the same reservations.

Mr. Rizzo told Mr. O'Donnell “I believe you are a very good soldier and will make this happen – if this is indeed the direction we take.”

Mr. Rizzo confirmed that a small number of Bentley students currently come to the High School for some part of their day for elective courses. Mr. Rizzo asked why moving that group to the High School was a bad idea and Mr. O'Donnell agreed much of what Mr. Stafford had indicated was perfectly logical and proven by performance. True, students had had difficulty in the High School. Mr. O'Donnell pointed out that they were walking a tight rope here. "Were we isolating the students in a way that would be considered outcasts, unwelcome, or providing a school within a school? It was a very delicate balance.

Mr. O'Donnell discussed with Mr. Rizzo the times and places where challenges would crop up, e.g., the Cafeteria, Physical Education. He did not think the scenario of complete isolation was a real possibility. From his point of view if they were looking at a short term placement at the High School and then came up with another alternative, that would be a better set of circumstances. He thought an offsite program could be very positive for students. They were, after all, all Manchester students, and needed to be considered in that light.

He concluded by stating that the best alternative would be to have an offsite program based on our historical successes. Right now it didn't appear to be a possibility but they would do the best they could for the students.

Mr. Edwards wanted to know if it were not for a budgetary issue would it be fair to say Mr. O'Donnell and Ms. Golden would support an offsite program versus an onsite program. They both wholeheartedly agreed they would, and it was the more educationally sound answer. Mr. O'Donnell had one reservation - he would not like the offsite program to be too far away from the High School for students to transition back.

Mr. Crockett pointed out that one alternative suggested had been the Grange which was completely on the other side of town. He put the question to Mr. O'Donnell "What would you rather have - the Grange where it would be very expensive to transport and transition back, or have them at the High School? Mr. O'Donnell responded he would prefer the Grange and have a ten-minute ride.

Dr. Ouellette said they would look at other options as they utilized Manchester school staff in other capacities with paying transportation costs etc.

Mr. Rizzo did not want any hidden costs if that was the way they chose to go.

Ms. Golden said the plan was to add the PASS class at Bentley since it was one class that was required for graduation and not currently taught. They had qualified staff to teach it and added it so that students at Bentley would have all the required courses offered at the alternative school and they had the option of taking a class at the High School.

Ms. Golden reflected that as she had listened to discussions about moving into the High School one thing they had not focused on the previous week, which was very important, and could be difficult, i.e., maintaining the integrity of the program and those components that had promoted success for students.

Ms. Golden gave a Power Point presentation on the Bentley Alternative Program. The slide contents included Smaller Group, Collaboration Among the Group, and advantages of Bentley – Emotional. Very Structured Program, Part-Time Staff, and Student Testimonials.

Ms. Golden concluded the presentation with pictures of the students in class with their teachers. The image presented was of very happy students who appeared totally engrossed in the subjects they were studying. It also revealed the rapport between student and teacher and it was very obvious why the Bentley Alternative Program was such a success.

Ms. Golden concluded by saying the program provided protection and a safety net for students. They were very proud to be known as Bentley students. Ms. Golden had assured the students that wherever they moved the components of the program that were so important to them; that closeness; that sense of community; staff who know them well and care about them; would be maintained. Many students were very worried about having the same kind of distractions which influenced them when they were at the High School. They had got caught up in many conflicts. They need that protection, that safety net! They did not want to be stigmatized.

Ms. Hackett said she would presently be talking about the list of recommended reductions that she had asked the Superintendent to come up with that would try to identify a bridge of \$200,000 in order to service Bentley students offsite. They did not know where or how, but at least would try to identify other monies in the budget they could use to relocate that program.

Mr. Pattacini asked if Ms. Golden could provide the demographic breakdown of the students in the program and was told they had almost an even number of students per grade and an even number of male and female. They had, over all 61% of color, seventeen middle school students, eleven 8<sup>th</sup> graders and six 7<sup>th</sup> graders. They hoped to graduate eight seniors this year and she had referrals from the Middle School. She had met with Illing staff and there were sixteen 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grader referrals. Every day she got another referral from the High School and the number was up to ten for the coming year. Already they were looking to starting with a waiting list.

Dr. Ouellette clarified that the Bentley alternative students were a different type of learners from our Manchester Regional Academy students and there were significant challenges. Bentley learners preferred a smaller environment knowing they could not fit in.

Dr. Ouellette also pointed out reductions that she knew Ms. Golden had listed, i.e., Guidance and Social Work Support. That was truly not in the Bentley Alternative Program Support. Those services were provided only because Bennet Middle School was taken offline. Those services would not necessarily be going to be supporting that program. They were Bowers services!

Mr. Edwards expressed the thought that the Board Chair had an excellent plan for the next steps to go through and for reductions to help pay for an offsite program for the High School students. He shared Mr. Stafford's evaluation that the Middle Schooler would

benefit from being in the K Wing at the High School. He was, basically, thinking four classrooms. Some of the students had 'lost their way' at the High School in a big setting, or whatever the cause. It was incumbent on the Board to try to service them and recognize that for the students in the Bentley program who may have been on the wrong track they were not alone. It was important to have a place for students who might get into controversial situations. The point he made was that this was not beneficial just for the Bentley students but those who may be struggling less with the environment but running with the same crowd. He was really very much in favor of keeping the facility offsite and hoped that in the coming days they could come up with some consensus on how that might be funded.

Dr. Ouellette expressed she was very pleased to hear that the majority of the Board supported the need for looking at an alternative site and recognized the need to remove them from the Bentley site because of safety factors. She could not support starting a Head Start program in an unsafe environment.

Dr. Ouellette said she and Ms. Brooks had looked at some recommended reductions and additional information had been provided in Board packets, e.g., NESDEC numbers for 2006/2007; the projections in the Actual; the Per Pupil amounts from 2004/2005 and what those allotments were through 2008/2009. Ms. Brooks had also prepared a reduction per pupil allocation and also a listing of current Town Commitments.

Ms. Brooks pointed out that some of the paperwork was for information purposes of what would happen to the schools with reducing the per pupil that was recommended at the previous meeting and the history of the per pupil amounts. In 2004/05 it was \$155 the recommended for elementary and that had been reduced to \$130.

The Town Commitments sheet showed the reductions that were going to be made based on new figures given to the Board by the Town since the original recommendation back in January.

The recommended areas identified by Ms. Brooks, where we could take pockets of money that would not affect students as much as it would other areas of the budget:-

Homeless Transportation: we had done better this year than in prior years. The original request was \$55,000. Ms. Brooks recommended we revise the budget to \$25,000 and pick up \$30,000 in there. If we went over the \$30,000 Ms. Brooks would have to find the money in other areas. Currently they were at \$20,000. The previous year they spent \$75,000 so it was a guesstimate for next year.

Late buses - Bennet and Illing - for After School programs. The revised budget was zero and the choice was taking her recommendation of reducing the entire amount, a proportion of the amount, or none of it. The After School programs did have a good purpose - academic, support after school, as well as interscholastic programs in both schools. The late bus at Bennet would also provide transportation home for students who participated in the Rec. programs offered after school.

Special transportation: Ms. Brooks was recommending a \$50,000 reduction and that was based on a meeting with Ms. Tait and the expectation that we would be bringing students back into district into our own programs and \$50,000 was approximately one and a half buses, depending on locations. That was a guestimate.

Policy 3510 Capital Repair and Capital Projects had already been reduced to bring them down to the 2.96% of the budget increase. However, this area would require a two-thirds vote in order to reduce. Ms. Brooks recommended they just bring it down a small percentage, .25%-.20% for Capital Repair and from .30%-.25%. This amount of money would move us forward but not as forward as we would be able to move and was approximately \$50,000 for both those reductions.

Policy 3511, which had been working well in the district, had already been reduced down to the 2.96%. However, if we went from .5% - .45% would be approximately another \$50,000 and we were still much further ahead in Technology. That would also require a two-thirds vote, based on Board policy.

Ms. Brooks said she reluctantly put down an IT Technician. We were adding Technology at the High School; we had one IT Technician who serviced all computers, both student and office staff. Ms. Brooks could not give up the Technician at Bennet with all the technology being put in and still expect the teachers to be able to maintain the computers.

Ms. Brooks had reluctantly put down a Custodian and she would probably have to take that position from the High School and meant she would have to redirect the cleaning schedule. This would not be up to her standards but we would have to survive that. This would be in addition to the Technician they had already removed from the budget.

Magnet School Tuitions would be reduced by another \$100,000. This item had already been reduced \$100,000. If we did not pay the amount of school tuitions we were billed our educational cost share grant would be adjusted by the State.

Ms. Brooks had identified about \$450,000 of reductions. After reviewing with the Central Office team these reductions would not directly affect students and this was in accordance with the wishes of the Superintendent.

Ms. Hackett thought this was a good foundation from which the Board could work and make further revisions or adjustments.

Dr. Ouellette asked Ms. Brooks to review the Town commitments.

Ms. Brooks informed we shared a financial software package with the Town, purchased as a lease purchase in 2003. That would continue for a number of years. However, the maintenance fee was adjusted every year based on the maintenance fee charged and our percentage of that would be \$35,500 next year, an increase of 13.9%.

The Athletic Field Maintenance – the Town maintained the High School athletic fields. The \$65,000 paid for a maintainer and Ms. Brooks gets billed for supplies and materials over and above that amount.

The School Resource Officers 4.9% increase next year – up to \$197,432.

The MSIP Contribution was an amount that we were told we had to pay back to the Town to have money in the self-insurance fund. This year it was \$416,590. An Actuarial analysis was done and the Board of Education uses more of a percentage of that insurance fund, as well as the increase to get it up to where it should be. This will give us a 50% increase next year up to \$627, 773. That was after a reduction by the Town Manager of \$87,757 – which was still \$211,183 over and above this year.

Information Services. We paid a portion of running the Town’s Information Services Department. We shared our area network with them and this was a portion of people’s salaries. That was going up 2.6%, to \$292,427.

The Facility Projects Management was for two architects the Town employed who worked with Ms. Brooks on school projects. This was half their salary and half their benefit package. This would increase 5.8% next year, up to \$115,081.

The Fiber Optic Lease Purchase was the network we shared with the town. This was on a lease purchase program and remains at \$165,000. Ms. Brooks believed we had a couple of more years on that.

The Streetlight Reimbursement was for maintenance of street lights on school property and that was \$6,420 and that had remained stable.

The Board paid a portion of Channel 16 to have our Board Meetings televised and contributed \$12,500 into that account to pay for the supplies and support for those programs.

The Early Childhood Specialist was a new commitment as of last year. Ms. Brooks did not have the increase but it was \$35,285 which was half the salary of the Early Childhood Specialist.

The Town Pension contribution was made by the Board for our unaffiliated employees who are non-certified and have to belong to the Town’s pension plan. This was the defined benefit program; the increase was an actuarial assessment, based on a percentage of salaries currently under that program. This was going down from \$1.4m to \$1.295m and that was reduced \$340,000 in 2009 by the Town Manager based on an Actuarial evaluation of the program.

Ms. Brooks was told that Town commitments for next year, without the adjustment for the Early Childhood Specialist, was \$2,932,294 which was almost \$120,000 – 4.2% increase in our Town commitments.

The floor was opened up for questions and discussions by Board members.

Mr. Stafford discussed the issue of paying half the Facility Projects Management with Ms. Brooks. The amount of money was increasing. Three years ago it was one-third coming out of the project; one-third the Town and one-third the Board of Education. With fewer projects on the table we were paying half and half. Mr. Stafford wanted to know hypothetically what would happen if we told the Town we could not support that. Ms. Brooks said at that time the Town would have to assess the value of having two Architects on staff and this would probably affect our ability to go ahead with some school projects. They agreed in that case there was a possibility of the Town saying it would be impossible to do referendum type of things.

Mr. Moran and Ms. Brooks discussed the HS Athletic Field Maintenance recapping that anything above \$65,000 the Board got billed for. Ms. Brooks said we got billed every year and with the rising cost of gas it would increase.

Mr. Edwards and Ms. Brooks discussed the Fiber Optic Lease Purchase of \$165,000 and Mr. Edwards asked if that came out of our 3511 Technology Budget. Ms. Brooks said it did not – it could because it was technology and we only had a certain number of years. Mr. Edwards wanted to know the exact number and Ms. Brooks said we were getting close to finishing off one of the lease purchases – possibly a seven year commitment. Mr. Edwards observed he was loath to cut any of the 3510/11 accounts. He thought this was the holiest of holiest with taxpayers, having committed to not allowing buildings to fall into disrepair as in the past. The technology was the same – we were not going to allow our technology to fall behind. He surmised if we were to at least purchase new technology from his point of view that would not be a cut to 3511 – it would be a reallocation. Ms. Brooks clarified it could be either the Fiber Optic Lease Purchase as well as the Munis.

Mr. Edwards agreed it could be either. It may be a violation of the spirit, but not the law of the policy.

Mr. Stafford and Ms. Brooks then discussed Kelly Services where there had been an increase of around \$10,000 and Ms. Brooks said that had just been an estimate. It was not in the budget. Ms. Brooks said she would look to find the money in her office budget to cover the cost, or it may have already been absorbed.

Ms. Hackett recapped that 3510/11 were pretty sacred and there was a spirit we needed to uphold in dipping into these accounts. Looking at her calculations, if we were not to dip into these accounts we needed about \$143,000 in reductions from some other place. Mr. Edwards and Ms. Hackett discussed an offset for these items.

Mr. Rizzo pointed out we had identified \$457,000 – additional savings of what we had already saved and this was corroborated by Ms. Brooks. He agreed the two items most of the Board wished they could put back in were Bentley where we needed about \$200,000 and the other item was the two All Day Kindergarten classes for another \$100,000. He reasoned that if we did two All Day Kindergartens and put Bentley somewhere else that

would be \$300,000. We had \$457,00 of additional cuts so we were actually \$157,000 more in savings than we had publicly identified we would like to put back in our budget.

Ms. Hackett thought the Board needed to confirm the figures because when everyone started to do their own math it could get confusing.

Ms. Brooks explained that she had put down more cuts than they needed to put in to give the Board options. She agreed with the views expressed about 3510/11; we had worked very hard and she cautioned on the 3511 as she had been told our students database software was coming up for revision. This meant that within the next year or two she would have to start looking at upgrading it.

Mr. Rizzo clarified his point was there were more savings identified than what they needed for the items he had quoted. There may be other items from other Board members they wished to put back.

Ms. Brooks related that right now if they did not look at 3510/11 they were down to \$314,465. The Alternative Education Program was \$193,000 + change and the Kindergarten was \$100,000 + change.

Ms. Brooks, Mr. Rizzo and Ms. Hackett had a general discussion on how he had arrived at his deductions and he emphasized he did not want to cut the Late Bus option.

Mr. Moran discussed the question of the Late Bus item which affected both Bennet and Illing After School Programs that were both academic and recreational. Did we know how many students who participated in those programs actually used the bus to get home? Ms. Brooks said the majority of them. Mr. Moran theorized that if we cut the buses we would be cutting the programs, and he would be against that.

Mr. Crockett asked for clarification on the Magnet School tuitions and Ms. Brooks explained these were billed to the School District. However, with the parent choice program a lot of school districts were not able to fund the entire amount of tuition and the State had said if the districts did not pay the tuition bills to the Magnet Schools they would adjust the educational cost share the Town got to support education. Mr. Crockett argued we would be \$200,000 off if we were to accept that and lessen our ECS money the following year. "It was like borrowing now and paying later." Ms. Brooks and Mr. Crockett continued to discuss the ramifications.

Mr. Stafford had a question on the type of Kindergarten they had at Verplanck. Was it an extended day? Dr. Ouellette responded it was just half a day because of the numbers.

Mr. Edwards talked about the MSIP Contribution arguing that this year it had been \$416,00 + change; this year they wanted \$627,663 - a 50% increase. He noted that we had reduced at by \$87,757 and was no longer 50%. Ms. Brooks interjected that it was over 50% after the reduction so the fact emerged that it was even higher. He got that there was an Actuarial Analysis; they needed to make sure they covered all the potential liabilities; he got

we were playing catch up. The Town needed to realize we cannot fix it in a year, or two, or three, not with a Budget that was less than 3%. This was not the year to ask for a 50% increase and he did not know how it would work legally if we were to simply say to the Town we could only give you \$577,000 and it was simply something they had to live with. That would be a \$50,000 chunk of change that would make a big difference to the budget.

From his perspective, he would share he was comfortable with the reduction in Homeless Transportation; he thought it would be ill-considered to cut the late buses as it disproportionately affected our free and reduced lunch population. He was comfortable with the Special Transportation \$50,000 reduction. He was uncomfortable with the 3510 /11 reductions and he was okay with the Magnet Schools. If he just took those three, plus \$30,000 from MSIP, would be over \$200,000 and he would be willing to go even further on that. It seemed to him that we could certainly come up with enough money to find some solution for Bentley.

Mr. Edwards felt they were not going to solve the problem that evening; there were too many unanswered questions. He would like to carve out roughly \$200,000 and earmark it in the budget for an offsite program for the Bentley students and hoped we could make it happen. He would be interested in other opinions and it should be the first thing on our Agenda.

Ms. Brooks pointed out a correction, i.e., the original MSIP increase was 71.8% and had been reduced to 50.7%. Mr. Edwards reiterated this was untenable in a year where we looking at serious cuts.

Ms. Hackett asked what Mr. Edwards thought about the Technician and Custodian positions. He was not in favor of either of those cuts and thought we should look to finding this money elsewhere.

Ms. Hackett and Ms. Brooks discussed procedures needed to initiate discussions with the Town on MSIP. Ms. Brooks thought they would have to inform them that we just did not have the money next year to fund the increase and try to work with them on how to handle it in future. This amount was to build up a fund to stay in an account - it was not an actual expenditure. It was the increase the Actuary felt should be in that account.

Dr. Ouellette pointed out that Administration had been trying to show good faith and restore the percentage that had been presented to them.

Ms. Hackett, while recognizing there was no formal agreement on this, would like to have something on record, as the Board prepared to vote on this, showing a request had been made, and had been acknowledged by the Town.

Mr. Edwards suggested taking a proactive action by simply letting the Town know that it was likely we would be unable to fund the amount requested and looking potentially at 'x' number of dollars, e.g., \$50,000 below what the Town had requested. Logistically they did not get this money until it was dispersed to them. They could be viewed in the same light as any other creditor.

Ms. Hackett was pleased to see the proposed reduction options proposed by Administration. She was not comfortable eliminating the Late Buses; not comfortable reducing the Capital Repair projects funding or the Technician or Custodian. She was in favor of reducing the MSIP contribution significantly and also the \$100,000 for the Magnet School Tuitions.

Mr. Rizzo reflected several years ago the Tomis Account was in danger of being under funded and actually going negative. The Town and Board had spent the last several years building that account up. He had noticed that day in the packet that over \$5m was now in that account and he did not know if that was considered healthy. What insurance did the MSIP account fund. Ms. Brooks detailed these for him and included Worker's Compensation; the Town's liability; the School Board et al. Ms. Brooks told Mr. Rizzo the deductible was \$50,000. Ms. Brooks did not know the MSIP balance.

Mr. Crockett and Ms. Brooks discussed MSIP at some length and Mr. Crockett concluded by intimating that he was not really happy because this was a contractual amount that we owed and he would certainly like to finance it out but if the Board owed it then they should pay it. It was a lot of money but for those years when we were not paying it no one complained that we should be paying more money to keep the levels up. It was our insurance. He would be receptive to the Town agreeing to a payment plan.

He agreed with his fellow Board members that he did not want to touch the 3510/11 accounts.

Mr. Edwards disagreed with Mr. Crockett's comments. In his view it was not as if we were not paying our bill; last year it was \$416,000 - this year it was \$627,000. What would Mr. Crockett do if his Home Owner's liability went up 50% in one year? Would he shop around? Call his Insurance Agent and try to negotiate a better deal? He might!

A lively debate followed between Mr. Edwards and Mr. Crockett. His guess was the Board of Directors could live with the fund not going up by an additional \$50,000.

Mr. Moran respected the Board's views on the three policy numbers as they had a lot more experience of this than he had. He came up with a total of \$278,000 which would get us \$200,000 for Bentley and at least \$50,000 for a Full Day Kindergarten. If we only asked \$22,000 for MSIP this would get us to a magic number of \$300,000 we would have another \$50,000 to either add another Kindergarten or do something else we were looking to do.

Ms. Hackett wanted to know about the \$12,500 for Channel 16. She had heard rumors about problems with equipment and technology, etc., and wondered what the current status was. Was the \$12,500 going towards equipment or staff? Ms. Brooks did not have the answer. Ms. Hackett made a request for somebody to make enquiries.

Ms. Hackett summarized the Board would have an answer very soon and adopt the budget on Thursday, June 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. Although they had come up with a solution they still had a lot of work to do in terms of finding an alternate site for Bennet; doing the legwork

and analysis to find out what was needed so they might be looking at a temporary placement at the High School.

She did not know if the Manchester students and parents were ready for this placement; what their knowledge was, what their involvement would be, and she would like to hear at some point from Mr. O'Donnell what we would be doing to apprise them of the change for Bentley.

Ms. Brooks reminded that they needed to know about Bentley by June 7<sup>th</sup>. The bids were going to be opened on June 12<sup>th</sup> and Ms. Brooks should have a figure of the actual savings for closing Bentley this year, instead of next year, prior to the next meeting. It had been estimated at \$60,000.

#### G. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Nicole Massey returned to the podium for the second time. She wanted to ensure the Board would remember one of the things she had commented on. She declared she had really been enlightened by all that she had heard at the meeting and realized they were all together for the same reason. Education was so important and she regretted she had not recognized that when she was in High School. She believed education started at a very early age and right now our children were our future and were living in a very critical time. She thought we really needed to recognize the need of all the students and the Board had to ask themselves "Are we really doing what the students need?" That was what counted because in the end they would be the ones who were taking care of us.

Kathleen Kiley also returned the podium to reiterate what she had said earlier about Meditation. She thought it was interesting that the Board had talked about the Alternative school. She shared that she had a Counseling Practice for thirteen years and now worked with elderly patients. There had been a lot of research based on their emotions and repressions and so she sees what is going at Bentley and knows from her practice and experience that meditation, and emotional development helped and was a very effective tool. It allowed for inner peace which allowed people to produce constructively. When people were learning they could not learn if there was anxiety. Her question to the Board was "Why aren't meditation and/or emotional development part of the daily curriculum?"

Dr. Ouellette pointed out that normally the Board did not take questions at this point in the meeting but had invited Ms. Tait to respond briefly to the question. Ms. Kiley was told this was something that would have to go through the Curriculum and Policy Committee and the Board already provided support for students from our Psychologists and Guidance Counselors who were trained in those areas.

Ms. Riley said she would be happy to provide further research information.

Ms. Hackett reminded that the Board would adopt the Budget on June 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. in the Presentation Room at Manchester High School.

#### H. CLOSING COMMENTS

There were no closing comments.

**I. ADJOURN**

**MOTION** Pattacini/Moran s.v. The Manchester Board of Education unanimously approved the motion to adjourn at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Enrique Marcano, Sr, Board Secretary  
Manchester Board of Education

