

Fort Fairfield Town Council Special Meeting
MSAD #20 Conference Room
Monday, May 22, 2017
6:00 P.M.

Councilors: Jason Barnes, Melissa Butler, John Herold and Scott Smith
Staff: James Risner, Ella Leighton and Billie Jo Sharpe
MSAD#20 Board: Karen Reynolds, Amanda McLaughlin, Susan Gould-Leighton
MSAD Staff: Tim Doak, Nancy Rogeski
Citizens: including media.

I. Roll Call - Chair Jason Barnes asked that the record reflect all councilors were present with the exception of Mr. Butler.

II. Discussion with School Board on MSAD #20 School Budget – Mr. Doak presented information about proposed legislation that would authorize the State to bargain for a statewide educator contract for standard salary and benefits in Maine’s public schools. Fort Fairfield is on the list for the proposed statewide teacher contract pilot program.

Cost drivers/cuts that are affecting education in the State of Maine:

- GPA going from \$1,000,961,515 to \$991,361,550: (loss of \$9.5 million)
- \$5.5 million GPA now earmarked in miscellaneous costs for regional grants – MSAD#20 applied for, did not receive. The Governor made 48 changes to education and how public schools are funded. Normally this is done through the legislative process. The Governor made these changes directly in the Budget. If the Budget passes, then the changes go into effect.
- \$18.5 million cut of declining student enrollment funds
- Charter School GPA up to \$23.4 million or a \$4.4 million increase FY 18
- \$20 million cut in system admin/Central Office – gave no money to Superintendent or Central Office.
- Normal teacher retirement up \$7 million
- SPED cost increases of \$17 million (likely more) – Of all the cost drivers, special Education is the one that is driving the costs up for Schools in Maine. Maine has great Special Education programs and people are moving from New Hampshire to Maine due to Special Education.

State says that SAD#20 should have 30.5 teachers. SAD#20 has a total of 37 teachers and if the Student/teacher ratio goes much lower, then the School may have to look at multi-grade classrooms.

Currently there are major Capital Improvements needed, such as window replacement, carpeting, heating – locker room, stage curtain, sidewalk repair, (the Town has agreed to do some sidewalk repair for the school this year at the Presque Isle Street entrance) intercom repair, vehicle repairs, tractor replacement and a bus. Last year there was a bus budgeted for, but the State did not authorize the purchase of a bus.

SAD#20 currently has no source of revenue. The only source of revenue is from the taxpayers.

Councilor Barnes asked if there would be any chance of drawing other students into SAD#20. Mr. Doak said that there is a real possibility with Limestone since they are

moving forward to withdrawing from RSU 39 and even in the future with Easton. "Easton currently receives no State funding."

Mrs. Gould-Leighton said that this was why the Board wanted to have the foreign languages (French) teacher, so if we are going to get other students to come from other towns, MSAD#20 will be able to provide a comparable education to other schools.

Mr. Doak stated that he has already cut over \$400,000 from this budget.

Mr. Risner mentioned that Public Works Director, Darren Hanson provided Jim Everett the information for the State auction/surplus website. This may be beneficial in the future for purchasing of vehicles and equipment. The Town will also help repair some of the sidewalk damage.

Melissa Libby asked if there were any other grants available for the school to potentially apply for.

Mr. Doak said any grants usually do not offset budgets; they assist with some programs, but do not help with operating expenses, salaries, etc.

John Herold said that MSAD#20's current budget increase is going to be a tremendous burden on the taxpayers.

Mrs. McLaughlin said the budget is down to bare bones and they cannot afford to cut any more programs.

Mrs. Libby asked if the proposed increases can be divided and spread out over a few years rather than all at once.

Mr. Herold asked if the School has any funds in a capital reserve account. Mr. Doak said no.

Mr. Smith asked what the contracted salary increase for next year will be. Mr. Doak replied between 2% and 2.5%.

Mr. Herold asked if there are plans to try to consolidate/share any more services with other school districts. Mr. Doak said there are a few areas that could be consolidated or shared such as Special Education, Transportation, Food Services, building maintenance, Superintendent Services, nurse and bookkeeper.

Mrs. Gould-Leighton said the school district is very open to sharing services and resources.

Mr. Doak said that every program or service the School has or provides needs to be looked at as being shared, partnered or otherwise.

Discussion about the Mil rate increase creating an average of \$148 annual increase in tax bills on a \$100,000 tax assessed home and causing a burden to the elderly and those who rent.

Mr. Barnes said it is important to keep your population by bringing in new families and businesses but also to have a good school system to draw in and keep families here.

Mr. Doak said a future goal would be to create and build a capital reserve account, meet maybe twice a year with town officials

III. Adjournment

With no further discussion, Mr. Herold made a motion to adjourn, Mr. Smith seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 7:18 pm