

Dighton~Rehoboth Regional District School Committee  
Special Meeting ~ April 08, 2014

A Special Meeting ~ Budget Workshop of the Dighton~Rehoboth Regional School Committee was held on April 08, 2014, in the Dighton~Rehoboth Regional High School library.

Present:

Richard Barrett  
Christopher Andrade  
Tiffany Bartholomew  
Eliza Couture  
Heather Cross  
David Katseff  
Susan Lorenz  
Raymond Medeiros  
Timothy Rapoza  
Janice Terry

Also:

Michael Malone, Interim Superintendent of Schools  
Gail Van Buren, Asst. Superintendent of Schools  
Catherine Antonellis, District Business Administrator  
Kellie Fagan, Recording Secretary

*Mr. Medeiros stated that the committee would enter into Regular session at: 6:35 PM. Mr. Medeiros stated that the meeting was being recorded with the help of the Rehoboth Cable Advisory Board.*

*Mr. Medeiros led the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.*

*Mr. Medeiros welcomed Heather Cross as the newest School Committee member from Rehoboth.*

*Mr. Medeiros also stated that there will be a recount petition in Rehoboth on the high school roof project, and that the community members need to vote at town meeting.*

*Mr. Medeiros noted that public discussion would take place after the School Committee discussion of the FY '15 is complete.*

Agenda Item #3, FY '15 Budget Discussion:

Mr. Malone and Ms. Antonellis led a discussion on the proposed FY '15 budget. This budget proposal represents a change from the 5.4% increase, to a 3.63% increase.

Mr. Malone reviewed each schools proposed cuts and additions:

PALMER RIVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- ✓ Additions: 3 team coordinators (stipend positions); 4 lunch/recess monitors (2 hours / day); .5 adjustment counselor; Kindergarten teacher for full-day kindergarten
- ✓ Cuts: retirements not being filled; team coordinators from 4 to 3; Grade 2 teacher; special education teacher salaries (various positions); nurse assistant; athletic officials; special education secretary (reorganization); special education medical/therapeutic

**D.L. BECKWITH MIDDLE SCHOOL:**

- ✓ Additions: special education teacher salary; health insurance; supervisory support (student lunches)
- ✓ Cuts: 1 FTE Foreign Language teacher; Librarian; team coordinators; instrument band teacher decreased to 7/10's of a position; 2 paraprofessionals; special education secretary (reorganization)

**DIGHTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:**

- ✓ Additions: .5 Adjustment Counselor to 1 FTE; .5 Psychologist to 1 FTE
- ✓ Cuts: 1 FTE special education teacher/coordinator; reduction of team coordinators from 5 to 3; non-athletic stipends; health insurance

**DIGHTON MIDDLE SCHOOL:**

- ✓ Additions: .5 Adjustment Counselor to 1 FTE; .5 Psychologist to 1 FTE
- ✓ Cuts: Grade 7 Spanish teacher; team coordinators from 5 to 3; Grade 5 teacher; Librarian; special education teacher; special education paraprofessional; special education secretary (reorganization); health insurance

**DIGHTON~REHOBOTH REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL:**

- ✓ Cuts: reduce CTE and Guidance Directors to 10-month work year (school year +); retirement; .5 social studies teacher; .5 business teacher; 1 FTE science teacher; 1 FTE math teacher; .5 childcare teacher; .5 office technology teacher; various electives

**CENTRAL OFFICE:**

- ✓ Cuts: reduction of 1 FTE secretary; full-time maintenance/electrician; maintenance/plumber

**DISTRICT-WIDE:**

- ✓ New position: Technology Engineer - \$75,000.00
- ✓ Reduction of 1 Network Technician (\$56,419)
- ✓ 3 integration teachers (\$167,670)
- ✓ 3 special education secretaries to provide support for the special education administration
- ✓ General teaching pre-kindergarten (reduction in student needs)
- ✓ ELA/Math Specialist - 1 FTE ELA and 1 FTE Math Specialists funded through Title I and Title IIA grants

Mr. Malone had all administration come to the table to review and answer questions about their budget proposals.

Mr. Malone addressed the committee regarding minimum net school spending. Minimum net school spending would be an additional \$2.6 million dollars out of the budget (approximately 50 staff positions would be cut). Mr. Malone stated that minimum net school spending is unacceptable.

Mr. Medeiros asked about the amount of money saved by changing the Guidance Director to a school year+ position. Ms. Antonellis will get back to the committee with that figure.

Mr. Katseff inquired about all the changes in health insurance amounts at the schools. Ms. Antonellis stated that she had done a recent recount of employees on health insurance, and that the Beckwith Middle School was not budgeted correctly. There were some line item changes

made. Also, Ms. Antonellis added 2 buffers for each campus and the high school into the total health care amount.

Mr. Andrade asked about the Dighton Middle School decreasing their Adjustment Counselor to 0.

Mr. Wheeler stated that DMS will now have 1 FTE Psychologist and 1 FTE Guidance Counselor for 400 students. Mr. Andrade asked if this is a decrease in the level of services for the students. Mr. Wheeler stated that this would be the same level service. Mrs. Lorenz noted that this person will be on-campus at all times.

Mrs. Pincince stated that Beckwith has 2 Psychologists and 1 Guidance Counselor for 600+ students.

Mr. Medeiros asked if there will only be 3 team coordinators for each school. Mr. Malone stated that these positions would coordinate with the coach positions. This is still not enough, per Mr. Medeiros. Mr. Medeiros reiterated how important team coordinators are in every school.

Mrs. Lorenz addressed the committee regarding going to the communities with 1 budget number to vote on. The amount must be fair to the towns' people and adequate for our students. It is not in the best interest of this district to change numbers at this time.

Mr. Medeiros asked if the original, proposed 5.4% budget had modifications to it. Ms. Antonellis reviewed the 4.8% proposed budget changes. Mr. Malone stated that the 5.4% is actually at 4.8% now.

Mr. Katseff spoke to the committee recommending the 3.63% budget increase (versus the 4.8% increase). Mr. Katseff asked for consensus to vote the 3.63% budget. Committee discussion ensued.

Mr. Andrade could not support this budget; he would be more comfortable with the 4.8% increase.

Mrs. Bartholomew reminded the committee that the 4.8% budget proposal is not a "level-service" budget. There will be the addition of full-day kindergarten at Dighton Elementary and Palmer River Elementary schools, and a Director of Grounds, Buildings, and Operations.

Mrs. Bartholomew inquired about the end-of-the-year balance for the district. Ms. Antonellis stated that all purchasing had been stopped on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mrs. Couture noted that class sizes are too high at Dighton Elementary School.

Mr. Barrett also cannot support the 3.63% budget; he will support the 4.8% increase.

Mr. Medeiros stated that the district educational needs should focus on the student and the teacher. We need to keep class sizes down. He too, agrees with the 4.8% increase.

Mr. Katseff stated again that the 4.8% increase is too high. The 3.63% budget has a good plan behind it, with the technology reorganization/integration specialists, and the Director of Grounds, Buildings, and Operations. He would support a 3.63% budget increase.

Mr. Medeiros asked each principal what affect the 3.6% versus the 4.8% budgets would have on the educational environment of their schools.

**DIGHTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:**

- ✓ Mrs. Manchester said that the major change would be losing the team coordinators (from 5 to 3), but curriculum would be the same or better

**PALMER RIVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:**

- ✓ Mrs. Miguel stated that she had not cut anything that would directly affect student learning

**DIGHTON MIDDLE SCHOOL:**

- ✓ Mr. Wheeler would like to have the team coordinators; operationally, losing the special education secretary will be difficult, as DMS will be losing a guidance portion of that secretary

**BECKWITH MIDDLE SCHOOL:**

- ✓ Mrs. Pincince stated that the instrumental band position decreasing to .7 would be a step back from where the district had been striving to go
- ✓ This decrease will also affect the school schedule
- ✓ Beckwith can't afford to lose their special education secretary, as the school has a large number of special needs children

Mrs. Couture asked about the school librarians. Mr. Malone explained that this would be incorporated in the technology reorganization.

Mrs. Terry addressed the committee regarding the special education reorganization. Each school needs their own secretary to handle each child's needs effectively, while performing the duties of a secretary. Three secretaries are not enough for over 400 special education students.

Mrs. Miguel stated that the current procedure for the special education secretaries is working very well. The ideal is what we have, we should not change it.

**DIGHTON~REHOBOTH REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL:**

- ✓ Mrs. Striano stated that cuts were made as equitable as was possible
- ✓ Electives that were reduced were doubles, repeats, etc.
- ✓ The decrease of the librarian is a big loss; the students need access to data base information

Mr. Rapoza noted that any technology positions added need to be clearly defined. He felt that reducing electives according to enrollment numbers, level of interest, etc. may be a better way to approach reducing electives.

Mrs. Lorenz said that she supports the 4.8% increase. She agrees with the technology reorganization piece. Education is constantly changing, and our students need to change with it.

Mr. Medeiros asked Mr. Malone how the 3.6% increase will impact the Central Office. Mr. Malone noted that with reorganization, there may be some impact bargaining required. Reorganization will give some employees more duties. The district will have to change the way things are done.

Mrs. Terry asked if one of the union secretaries in the Central Office would be eliminated. Mr. Malone stated that it may not be a union secretary, due to seniority. This would need impact bargaining.

Mr. Malone noted that the 5.4% increase, with slight adjustments, has gone down to 4.8%.

Mrs. DuBois spoke to decreasing Title One funds, with regards to supporting staff position(s). Mr. Malone reviewed Title One funds/laws.

Mrs. Bartholomew asked if full-day kindergarten is imperative at DES. Dr. Manchester responded that it is; students need the extra development and support. Mrs. Miguel agreed.

Mr. Malone addressed full-day kindergarten, and asked for direction for a budget number.

Mrs. Terry asked about the CTE Director's position being decreased.

Al Rose, DRRHS Interim CTE Director, addressed the committee regarding cuts. He stated that the CTE department needs small class sizes, to avoid safety issues.

Mrs. Terry asked for a Chapter 74 revenue amount for the district. Mr. Malone explained Chapter 74 and Special Education funding. Mrs. Terry read correspondence from the former Business Administrator, stating that the district received approximately \$770,000.00 in Chapter 74 funding for FY '12. She noted that this amount of money would support the CTE Program.

Mr. Medeiros asked Ms. Antonellis for the FY '15 year total operating budget (4.8% increase) figure. Ms. Antonellis will calculate that number for the committee.

*Mr. Medeiros announced that the committee would take a short break, at 7:50 PM.*

*Mr. Medeiros resumed the meeting at 8:10 PM.*

It was moved by Mrs. Lorenz, seconded by Mrs. Bartholomew, and VOTED to set the total FY ' 15 operating budget for the Dighton~Rehoboth Regional School District in the amount of: \$36,851,714.86 (4.8% increase). Public discussion ensued.

Sue Warren, Rehoboth resident and DMS teacher, addressed the committee about the district going forward and not backward. The School Committee needs to vote the Level One proposed budget ~ the 4.8% increase.

Sean Kane, Rehoboth parent, addressed the committee regarding the non-support of our children by the towns. The School Committee needs to go to each town with conviction on their budget numbers.

Melissa Lomba, DRRHS Foreign Language teacher, addressed the committee regarding the language program in the district (i.e. losing a Foreign Language teacher in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade on both campuses). We should be putting languages back into the system, not taking them out. With the elimination of 7<sup>th</sup> grade Foreign Language in the lower grades, incoming students will not be prepared for the high school languages.

Ronald O'Connor, Dighton resident, stated that it is \$70.00 additionally (per pupil) to reach the 4.8% increase.

Mr. Medeiros stated that the School Committee will make a recommendation, but the towns need to vote!

**ROLL CALL VOTE (on 4.8% budget):**

Mr. Andrade ~ Aye  
Mr. Barrett ~ Aye  
Mrs. Bartholomew ~ Aye  
Mrs. Couture ~ Aye  
Mrs. Cross ~ Aye  
Mr. Katseff ~ Nay  
Mrs. Lorenz ~ Aye  
Mr. Medeiros ~ Aye  
Mr. Rapoza ~ Aye  
Mrs. Terry ~ Aye

AYE ~ 8.0    NAY 1.0

MOTION PASSED

It was moved by Mrs. Lorenz, seconded by Mrs. Bartholomew, and VOTED to approve the Dighton FY '15 K-8 operating budget in the amount of \$9,590,857.18.

Mr. Andrade ~ Aye  
Mr. Barrett ~ Aye  
Mrs. Bartholomew ~ Aye  
Mrs. Couture ~ Aye  
Mrs. Cross ~ Aye  
Mr. Katseff ~ Nay  
Mrs. Lorenz ~ Aye  
Mr. Medeiros ~ Aye  
Mr. Rapoza ~ Aye  
Mrs. Terry ~ Aye

AYE ~ 8.0    NAY 1.0

MOTION PASSED

It was moved by Mrs. Lorenz, seconded by Mrs. Bartholomew, and VOTED to approve the FY '15 Rehoboth K-8 operating budget in the amount of \$12,280,737.82.

Mr. Andrade ~ Aye  
Mr. Barrett ~ Nay  
Mrs. Bartholomew ~ Aye  
Mrs. Couture ~ Aye  
Mrs. Cross ~ Aye  
Mr. Katseff ~ Nay  
Mrs. Lorenz ~ Aye  
Mr. Medeiros ~ Aye  
Mr. Rapoza ~ Aye  
Mrs. Terry ~ Aye

AYE ~ 7.0    NAY 2.0

MOTION PASSED

It was moved by Mrs. Lorenz, seconded by Mr. Andrade, and VOTED to approve the Dighton~Rehoboth Regional High School operating budget for FY '15 in the amount of \$14,980,119.86.

Mr. Andrade ~ Aye  
Mr. Barrett ~ Aye  
Mrs. Bartholomew ~ Aye  
Mrs. Couture ~ Aye  
Mrs. Cross ~ Aye  
Mr. Katseff ~ Nay  
Mrs. Lorenz ~ Aye  
Mr. Medeiros ~ Aye  
Mr. Rapoza ~ Aye  
Mrs. Terry ~ Aye

AYE ~ 8.0    NAY 1.0

MOTION PASSED

It was moved by Mrs. Lorenz, and seconded by Mr. Andrade to approve the K-12 FY '15 operating assessment for the town of Dighton in the amount of \$8,535,707.00. Committee discussion ensued.

Mr. Katseff addressed the committee about a "transitional" assessment method, and the process to change our assessment methodology. We would need to be updating our Regional Agreement at the same time. Mr. Katseff is proposing to divide up the budget additions using E & D funds (\$500,000.00), getting extra funding from Dighton (\$200,000.00), and then having Rehoboth pick up the rest (\$670,000.00). Mr. Katseff proposed that this could be a "transitional" assessment method.

The DESE, however, will not entertain a “transitional” assessment, unless the district is actively reviewing its’ Regional Agreement.

Mrs. Bartholomew asked what we have in the E & D fund. Ms. Antonellis said that it is just over 1 million dollars, but that is not a certified amount.

Mrs. Lorenz addressed the committee regarding an alternative method. The committee needs to vote on a budget tonight, using the statutory method.

Mrs. Terry spoke about the School Committee bringing their number to the towns, and let the people vote. This is the School Committee’s job.

Mr. Medeiros stated the he cannot support taking money out of E & D.

Mrs. Bartholomew gave a “worst case scenario” of voting the minimum net spending, which would be \$3 million dollars in cuts, if the communities do not vote in the assessments.

Mr. Medeiros stated that there will be a meeting with the School Committee and the Rehoboth Finance Committee this week.

Mr. Rapoza asked how the Dighton Finance Committee felt about an alternative method. Mrs. Couture stated that the Finance Committee wants to continue the statutory method. Note: both towns need to agree on an alternative method.

Mr. Katseff reminded the committee that the assessment number cannot be increased on town meeting floor. Mr. Katseff outlined another “worse case scenario” regarding the DESE setting a 1/12<sup>th</sup> budget (each month), based on FY ’14 (if there is no budget set after July 1<sup>st</sup>).

Mr. Jepsen, Rehoboth resident and parent, addressed the committee stating that the School Committee should stand behind the original budget numbers.

Committee discussion continued.

**VOTE:**

Mr. Andrade ~ Aye  
Mr. Barrett ~ Nay  
Mrs. Bartholomew ~ Aye  
Mrs. Couture ~ Aye  
Mrs. Cross ~ Aye  
Mr. Katseff ~ Nay  
Mrs. Lorenz ~ Aye  
Mr. Medeiros ~ Aye  
Mr. Rapoza ~ Aye  
Mrs. Terry ~ Aye



AYE ~ 7.0 NAY 2.0

MOTION PASSED

It was moved by Mrs. Lorenz, and seconded by Mrs. Terry to approve the K-12 FY '15 operating assessment for the town of Rehoboth in the amount of \$14,865,572.00. Committee discussion ensued.

Mr. Andrade moved, and Mr. Katseff seconded to amend the FY '15 K-12 operating assessment for the town of Rehoboth to \$14,365,572.00, by using \$500,000 from our E & D funds.

Mr. Malone noted that this would be considered an alternative method, and cannot be done. Mr. Andrade said that we can vote whatever amount the School Committee feels is appropriate, and let the DESE decide.

Mrs. Terry feels that there are too many projects in the future to be dipping into our E & D account.

Mrs. Bartholomew noted that she, personally, had never suggested that money be taken out of E & D.

Dean Cronin, Dighton Board of Selectmen, asked for the definition of an E & D fund. Mr. Malone explained what E & D is/means. Mr. Malone noted that this is a safety net account (at least one payroll should be left in this account at all times). Mr. Cronin noted that Dighton should not be responsible for Rehoboth's portion of the budget by using the joint E & D account.

Mr. Malone and Ms. Antonellis do not recommend taking funds out of E & D.

Mrs. Bartholomew reminded the committee that the E & D fund is for all 5 schools, it is not divided by towns.

Kevin Perry, Dighton resident, addressed the committee regarding the following: past assessment methodology, and taking money out of E & D ~ not a good practice.

Mrs. Bartholomew stated that, in the "worst case scenario", we can always go back to E & D; we don't need to take the funds now. Ms. Antonellis confirmed that fact.

Ed Swartz, Dighton Board of Selectmen, addressed the committee about the Regional Agreement and the powers of the School Committee as outlined in that agreement (with regards to 3 separate budgets). The School Committee needs to show what the consequences will be without sufficient funding.

Mr. Katseff again explained the statutory methodology.

Mrs. Lorenz and Mr. Katseff both stated that this assessment is for all 5 schools, not just one town or another.

**VOTE (on amendment):**

Mr. Andrade ~ Aye  
Mr. Barrett ~ Aye  
Mrs. Bartholomew ~ Nay  
Mrs. Couture ~ Nay  
Mrs. Cross ~ Nay  
Mr. Katseff ~ Aye  
Mrs. Lorenz ~ Nay  
Mr. Medeiros ~ Nay  
Mr. Rapoza ~ Nay  
Mrs. Terry ~ Nay  
AYE ~ 2.8    NAY 6.2

MOTION FAILED

**VOTE (on original motion):**

Mr. Andrade ~ Aye  
Mr. Barrett ~ Nay  
Mrs. Bartholomew ~ Aye  
Mrs. Couture ~ Aye  
Mrs. Cross ~ Aye  
Mr. Katseff ~ Nay  
Mrs. Lorenz ~ Aye  
Mr. Medeiros ~ Aye  
Mr. Rapoza ~ Aye  
Mrs. Terry ~ Aye  
AYE ~ 7.0    NAY 2.0

MOTION PASSED

It was moved by Mrs. Lorenz, seconded by Mrs. Terry, and VOTED to set the FY '15 K-12 total district operating assessment in the amount of \$23,401,280.00.

Mr. Andrade ~ Aye  
Mr. Barrett ~ Nay  
Mrs. Bartholomew ~ Aye  
Mrs. Couture ~ Aye  
Mrs. Cross ~ Aye  
Mr. Katseff ~ Nay  
Mrs. Lorenz ~ Aye  
Mr. Medeiros ~ Aye  
Mr. Rapoza ~ Aye  
Mrs. Terry ~ Aye  
AYE ~ 7.0    NAY 2.0

MOTION PASSED

It was moved by Mr. Andrade, seconded by Mrs. Lorenz, and VOTED to set the FY '15 Dighton K-12 capital assessment in the amount of \$172,487.00.

*VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS*

It was moved by Mr. Andrade, seconded by Mrs. Bartholomew, and VOTED to set the FY '15 Rehoboth K-12 capital assessment in the amount of \$286,667.00.

*VOTE ~ AYE ~ UNANIMOUS*

It was moved by Mr. Andrade, seconded by Mrs. Bartholomew, and VOTED to set the FY '15 district operating and capital assessment in the amount of \$23,860,434.00.

Mr. Andrade ~ Aye  
Mr. Barrett ~ Nay  
Mrs. Bartholomew ~ Aye  
Mrs. Couture ~ Aye  
Mrs. Cross ~ Aye  
Mr. Katseff ~ Nay  
Mrs. Lorenz ~ Aye  
Mr. Medeiros ~ Aye  
Mr. Rapoza ~ Aye  
Mrs. Terry ~ Aye

AYE ~ 7.0    NAY 2.0

MOTION PASSED

It was moved by Mr. Andrade, seconded by Mrs. Bartholomew, and VOTED to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 PM. Roll call vote:

Mr. Andrade ~ Aye  
Mr. Barrett ~ Aye  
Mrs. Barth ~ Aye  
Mrs. Couture ~ Aye  
Mrs. Cross ~ Aye  
Mr. Katseff ~ Aye  
Mrs. Lorenz ~ Aye  
Mr. Medeiros ~ Aye  
Mr. Rapoza ~ Aye  
Mrs. Terry ~ Aye

MOTION PASSED

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*Janice Terry, Secretary*