



Learning Today. Leading Tomorrow.

Single Issue Meeting: 2019 – 2020 Budget

Wednesday, April 10, 2019

7:00 p.m.

High School Cafeteria

- State Aid cut of \$1.1 million; year one of six years of cuts
- Budget is only decreasing 2/10th of 1%, tax levy will remain the same
- Town is designating HMX property in economic development zone which adds value
 - Parking area adds value to it
 - Building is assessed a \$2 million but building will be demolished
 - Waiting for permission to sell property
- BOE agreed that some revenue from HMX sale can be used to offset tax increase
- District also owns other land; includes cell tower land that district makes ~\$80k a year from
 - Cell tower company that leases land would like to buy land
 - State law is holding up cell tower land sale (for \$1.75 million); no law that governs a permanent easement to a cell tower company
 - BOE agreed that cell tower land sale money can be used for initiatives in the district (especially the HS); not for personnel but for improvements
- “Unusual school year budget”
 - Budgets must have revenues to offset appropriations and expenditures
- **No cut of any teaching staff member because of the budget**
- Utilizing retirements as a means to provide man or woman power to new initiatives from cell tower sale
- District gets extraordinary aid- expenditures of more than \$60k for a single student but does not count transportation
 - State only funds this at 55%
- If student gets OT, PT or Speech therapy and family gets Medicaid then we get aid from the state
- Miscellaneous revenue comes from sales
 - \$162k from maintenance reserve is being used towards budget
 - Cut three administrative positions
 - Cut kindergarten aids – will be replace with phonics program
 - If there are no more retirements, two custodial positions will be cut
- Administrative costs (according to the state) include things such as phone bill and copy leases
- PD, supply, professional services lines of budget are “healthy”
- Salaries take up a great deal of budgets; we spend less percentage of our salaries for our budget compared to most others
- State believes we spend too much money per student
- Hopatcong has more land that can be sold

Questions

- **How are the budget cuts going to affect Kindergarten classes and what was the reasoning behind cutting the aids?**
Led by the principals and Yvonne Mortello, they studied assessments of the younger children and even went to a different assessment to get a better judgement. Assessments did not come out well. Decision was to keep the classes as small as we can but want to use the phonics program as a means to improve the reading scores of children. What we were doing was not working.
- **What happens with current seventh grade students as far as graduation ceremonies?**
Kids in 7th grade will have a promotion ceremony in 7th grade and they will also have one in 8th grade. Will have same things that kids in 8th would have. Grades 4-7 will have same start and end time; will start at 7:25.
- **If the cell tower doesn't sell then how will we fund programs at HS?**
The land will sell.
- **Who is going to oversee curriculum?**
Will be overseen by Superintendent's Office and will be overseen by other persons in the district. The ideas and plan will be brought in front of the BOE as soon as it is made. We do not have 5 year curriculum assessment plan as of right now; will decide on plan.
- **Why offset the 2 point tax increase instead put the money back in the schools?**
If you don't do a zero-based budget then that is a logical thought. If we can do what we need to do without raising taxes that is a plus. The state commissioner sent nasty letter saying that costs of district need to be reduced.
- **What is the name of the phonics program?**
Reading specialists are looking into it. Programs range in price; do not need to spend \$45k.
- **Is there going to be an assessment to see if ongoing phonics program is effective?**
DIBELS scores were bad. If next year's scores demonstrate improvement then phonics program is working. This is a yearly test. The information will be made available as per the principal's decision.
- **Will the 4 & 5 grades be on the same schedule as the MS?**
Will be running 4 & 5 just like it is done now. Partially departmentalized. Will switch for ELA and Math. Will be on the same bell schedule. Changes are being done one-piece at a time.
- **Will there be a change in time for "new" DA?**
Will be on same schedule as TT and share bus with TT
K – 3 will be on a bus
4 – 7 on a bus
8 – 12 on a bus

- **Address concern that Grade 4 will get out of school at 1:55; could use extra time.**
K, 1st and 2nd grade scores have reasons for being somewhat low; the PARCC test scores have different reasons why they are low. District has an average of 12 children per grade level in charter/choice schools. That drains our brains, our PARCC scores would be a lot better. Our district must improve so we lose less students to these schools. Hopatcong can never become a choice school because of the law.
- **Students at the MS right now are doing block schedule for 4 classes, will that stay?**
This will continue at the HS; classes will be 1.5 periods.
- **Will students entering grade 5 in MS be able to enter clubs/band/chorus with grades 6 and 7?**
If it is appropriate and the student is mature enough then yes.

Other:

- Current total valuation of Hopatcong is over \$1 billion and it increased by 10 million last year. It helps tax rate
- On May 1st there will be a meeting called Choice Hopatcong.
- Families with young children are starting to buy more houses
- There will be advanced classes again.
- Transition classes will continue
- There will still be before and after care for 5th grade
- Mr. Hallenbeck will be 8th grade co-principal
- Assistant superintendent position was cut from the budget; BOE may revisit that
- Changing the time of the schools allowed us to cut money from transportation and that money was already re-allocated
- Significant number of volunteers in Hopatcong that are untapped; we can put together a volunteer core that will help us in certain areas
- Heterogeneous classes between transition and advanced
- Teaching staff will be moved around a little but none will be cut