

**Stafford Board of Education
Budget Committee Meeting
Stafford Elementary School Library
Monday, December 4, 2017, 5:45 p.m.**

Present: Mr. Peter Kovalski, Board Member, arrived at 5:55 p.m.
Mrs. Andrea Locke, Board Member (Alternate, until 5:55 p.m.)
Mr. George Melnick, Board Member
Ms. Sonya Shegogue, Board Member
Dr. Paul Smotas, Interim Superintendent
Ms. Diane Peters, Business Manager
Mr. Jon Hipsher, M & J Bus Co., Inc.

1. Call to Order

The committee meeting was called to order at 5:50 p.m.

2. Transportation Request

Dr. Smotas stated that Mr. Hipsher brought a billing issue forward to Dr. Collin, who denied his request. Dr. Smotas said that he felt that Mr. Hipsher should have an opportunity to present his case and M & J's perspective to the Board Budget Committee.

Mr. Hipsher explained that the district was not billed for three mid-day buses during the 2016 – 2017 school year. He said that that district was billed for the monitors, but M & J neglected to bill for the buses, in the amount of \$53,000. Mr. Hipsher explained to circumstances at M&J at the time of the billing error.

Mr. Hipsher said that the contract is favorable for Stafford Public Schools, as it states that once the district makes a final payment for a school year, the books are closed on that year. Mr. Hipsher asked that the Board consider the circumstances surrounding the billing error and the long-standing relationship the district has with M & J. He said that if the situation were reversed, M & J would work with the district.

Ms. Shegogue said that it is her feeling that the Board should do the right thing and pay the bill. She asked if the district could make payments and / or receive a discount. Mr. Hipsher said that he would check with his boss and get back to the Board.

Dr. Smotas reported that he spoke with the Board of Finance Chairperson earlier in the afternoon and that the town will experience a \$1.2 million shortfall in revenue in 2017-2018. He asked if it may be possible that the payments be spread out over two or three years.

Dr. Smotas asked that Mr. Hipsher get back to him with more information by Monday, December 11, 2017.

3. 2017 – 2018 Budget Status

Dr. Smotas said that as he mentioned earlier, it is projected that the Town of Stafford will have a \$1.2 million shortfall in revenue in 2017 – 2018.

Originally, Stafford was slated to receive a cut of approximately \$450,000. Subsequently, Governor Malloy removed an additional \$800,000 from town aid. Dr. Smotas said that the budget and hiring freeze that was in put in place in late August is still in place. Dr. Smotas said that he and his staff are reviewing the current budget to identify how much savings the district may realize, which will ultimately be returned to the town to offset the shortfall.

Dr. Smotas said that the district will need direction from the Board of Finance regarding how the shortfall will be covered. He suggested that there be a joint meeting between the Board of Finance, the Board of Education and the Board of Selectmen, so that a collaborative decision can be made. He also said that he will be meeting with union leadership to see if they have any ideas.

Dr. Smotas informed the committee that a Social Security Alternative Plan and a Medicaid Reimbursement Plan are being investigated as sources of savings / revenue for the district.

4. Adjournment

The committee meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Marinelli, Recording Secretary