

Bethel Board of Education Regular Meeting - Budget Workshop

Thursday, January 26, 2023 7:00 PM

Board of Education Conference Room E, 1 School Street, PO Box 253, Bethel, CT 06801

1. Call to Order

Speaker(s): Policy
9326

1.A. Roll Call for Quorum

1.B. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Budget Workshop - (IT, Curriculum, SPED)

3. Correspondence

Speaker(s): Policy
9326

4. Public Comment

(Please note: The Board welcomes Public Comment and asks that speakers please limit their comments to 2 minutes. Speakers may offer objective comments of school operations and programs that concern them. The Board will not permit any expression of personal complaints or defamatory comments about Board of Education personnel and students, nor against any person connected with the Bethel Public School System.)

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5. Adjourn

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#	Name - Initials	Question(s)	Answer(s)
Facilities - January 24, 2023			
1.	BF JL SC CS	As we have had in the past could we get a breakout of those items included in "School Building Repairs and Maintenance".	Yes, it is now posted in the shared drive. Hardcopies are available at the budget workshop.
2.	JL	In C)313 preventive maintenance why such a large cut in #5 Clock/Intercom/Public intercom system 50%?	We are in the process of replacing the PA Systems at three schools, BHS & BMS, and Berry. We are anticipating that the new systems will require less maintenance in 23-24.
3.	JL	In C313 preventive maintenance why the cut to line 14 roof warranty/maintenance?	Roof Warranty maintenance is increasing from \$11,000 to \$13,000.
4.	BF	Which projects have not and will not be completed this year that were listed for this year?	BHS: Replaced damaged restroom wall partitions BMS: Replace restroom wall partitions Johnson: Install loading dock doorbell for deliveries Berry: Additional Parking Lot Signage Berry: Re-striping of vehicle parking - rear teacher's lot Berry: Repair and/or replace worn areas of carpet * Rockwell: Install loading dock doorbell for deliveries Rockwell: Paint boiler room flooring * * Prioritized out of 23-24 budget
5.	MO KD	Follow up to comment 1. above, does proposed budget for building repairs	The School Building Repairs and Maintenance budget includes only the repairs listed in the breakout. The funds for emergency repairs are in the Outside

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		and maintenance cover known and anticipated (including emergency) repairs?	Contractor Funding line.
6.	MO CS	Preventive maintenance contracts for HVAC are up nearly 25%. Please explain. If maintenance on new equipment increases, would repair costs on old equipment drop?	Historically, we have been paying for the majority of our HVAC work on a time and materials basis, as our existing maintenance contract only includes a cursory visual inspection of equipment. Our new contract will cover more regular maintenance as well as regular testing of equipment to identify signs of equipment failure. We have shifted funding from outside contractors and the boiler's maintenance line to offset the cost of the HVAC maintenance.
7.	MO	Roof warranty/maintenance shared with Town- what is the pro rata or formula to allocate this item between Town and District?	The current contract explicitly lists the fees for our five school buildings as \$11,081.67. The cost per building is based on the square footage of the roof.
8.	SC	Why are mandated inspections in C) 313 (alarms, sprinkler, kitchen hoods etc.) all up in cost? Are these costs all the results of inflation?	The budget for the state boiler and elevator inspections was increased by \$50 each in anticipation of an increase next year. The inspection and maintenance services for burglar alarms, fire alarms, sprinkler systems, and elevators were increased by approximately 3% each in anticipation of next year's fee increases.
9.	BF	Why do we need to upgrade the high school gymnasium bleachers to open and close electronically instead of manually?	Currently, the bleachers are difficult to open. It requires multiple people and we have had issues in the past when the bleachers became out of alignment. Also, in the past, the wheels damaged the gym floor, and we would like to prevent future damage by upgrading the wheels.
10.	BF	What is the status of the plan to install bollards at the high school?	Instead of installing bollards that look like posts benches were installed at the high school. The benches are secured to the ground and provide both security functionality and seating.
11.	CM	Do we need to upgrade our existing systems to meet new building codes?	We are required to update to new codes if we are doing work on the building or system. For example, because we had a leak in our sprinkler system, we are now

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			required to update to the current code when we fix the leak.
12.	SC	6502: Tech Supplies and Software subscriptions. BHS has a \$17,161 increase. That seems like a very specific amount. Other increases are BMS-\$4,300, Berry-\$2,400, JS-\$3,300, RS-\$2,400. The total for the line is just over \$29k. These lines were "0" in the previous years What specifically is purchased with these funds?	<p>6502 Tech Supplies and Software Subscriptions is a new account.</p> <p>BHS: \$17,161 - This amount was transferred from Software - Technology. The funds will be used for multiple software subscriptions including Pickatime (conference scheduler), Albert IO (for AP courses), Keystone (for credit recovery), Moby Max, and ALEKS for intensive support.</p> <p>BMS: \$4,300 - Funds were transferred from the equipment lines. They will be used to purchase IXL, Rosetta Stone, Noodle Tools, etc.</p> <p>JS: \$3,300 - Funds were reallocated from the textbook line to pay for IXL, Bloxels, Gale and Smart Music software subscriptions.</p> <p>Berry: \$2,400 - Funds were added to this line for Haggerty and Ruler.</p> <p>Rockwell: \$2,400 - Funds were added to this line for Haggerty, and Ruler.</p> <p>Previously the expense for Haggerty and Ruler was paid out of the curriculum budget and it is being transferred to Berry and Rockwell next year.</p>
13.	SC	7306: Software-technology. Why the \$20k reduction at BHS and the \$3,300 reduction at BMS. These lines are "0" in other buildings.	<p>This reflects a transfer of funds from the 7306 Software-technology (one-time license purchases "owned by the district") to the 6502 Tech Supplies and Software Subscriptions line (recurring subscription costs).</p> <p>BHS moved \$17,161 to the Software Subscription Line (6502).</p> <p>BMS moved \$3,000 to the Software Subscription Line (6502).</p>
14.	SC	4440: Central Office. Leases- Fiscal Services- Technology: What do we lease for \$11,000 that had a \$2,000 reduction in one year?	We renegotiated our contract to lease a postage meter from Pitney Bowes, and the new lease costs less.
15.	BF	Bethel's Special Education population as a percentage of the total population has drifted up from	You are correct that special education percentages have increased both locally and at the state level. This trend was established well before COVID. Fortunately, we remain below the state average. In my opinion, the primary factor is increased

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		<p>12.9% in 18-19 to 14.3 % in 21-22. My guess is it again has slightly increased in 22-23. The state average in the same time period has gone from 14.3% to 18.7%. Could you again briefly explain your thoughts as to why and where you think we will go from here?</p>	<p>awareness and identification of disabilities such as Dyslexia, Autism Spectrum Disorders, and ADHD.</p> <p>However, post-COVID, we have also had a significant increase in the number of young children with disabilities. This may be related to difficulties with early identification and services for students between Birth and age 3 over the past three years.</p>
16.	BF	<p>Applitrack presently shows an opening for the position of Supervisor of Technology Infrastructure and Operations. Is it still open? If yes, your thoughts? Is IT experiencing turnover? If yes, what are your thoughts on why? Is it a compensation issue?</p>	<p>The Supervisor of Technology Infrastructure and Operations opening is due to a retirement. Yes, the position is still open. We did not have a large pool of candidates and there were only a handful of applicants that met the minimum requirements for the position, in part due to the fact that it was a mid-year posting. After conducting interviews, the interview committee decided to continue our search for a more experienced candidate that brings a balance of leadership and technical skills essential to the role. It is important that we provide a competitive salary for this position to attract high-quality candidates.</p>
17.	BF	<p>Please explain the decrease in IT Equipment -Technology from \$200,000 to \$132,000.</p>	<p>In order to hold the technology budget flat year to year and plan for the 3-5% increase in software subscription costs, the equipment line was cut by \$13,000. Also, cloud hosting to improve cybersecurity, and shifting of subscriptions from ESSER/ARP to operating budget, has impacted subscription costs.</p> <p>The remainder of the change is an accounting reclassification. Only Chromebooks are included in the IT Equipment Line for 23-24. The associated cases and Google licenses have shifted to Technology Supplies and Subscriptions (6502).</p> <p>In addition, as you are aware, much of the Federal grant money the district received as a result of COVID was used to support the technology infrastructure. This money was used to replace most of the staff laptops and communication boards within the classroom.</p>
18.	BF	<p>Please explain the increase in</p>	<p>Spending patterns indicate an increase is needed, as our prior spending exceeded</p>

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		instructional supplies under curriculum.	the budget in this line.
19.	BF	Please explain the decrease in mileage under the curriculum budget as well as in some other departments.	We are traveling less due to online conferences and an effort to manage expenses.
20.	KD	1215: BMS The cost of school monitors has gone up while the FTE has remained at .93 Please explain. How are the monitors used? I noticed the same in BS, JS, and RS- Is there an increase in pay?	The minimum wage increases from \$14.00 to \$15.00 per hour as of July 1, 2023. The monitors are supervising the lunch room and are used for recess at the elementary level.
21.	KD	1216: Paraeducators: Are the majority of paraeducators hired to support Special Education students? What other areas do the paraeducators support, such as K classrooms? What is the number of paraeducators across the district?	<p>Yes. The majority of paraeducators are in special education. There are regular education paraeducators in the following roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Library Media 3.0 ● Kindergarten 4.0 ● Reading paraeducators 2.0 grant ● Math paraeducators 2.0 ● TASK paraeducator 1.0 ● ISS paraeducator 1.0 ● 13 Total Regular Education - 11 in operating budget <p>There are 71 special education paraeducators. The balance of special education paraeducators that are not in the operating budget is funded through grants such as IDEA, ARP/ESSER, and preschool grants. Some are also funded through COF tuition and Medicaid reimbursement funds.</p>
22.	KD	7303 SW: Why the decrease in Equipment Instructional- SPED? What	I think you are referring to a reduction in request from \$4500 last fiscal year to \$1500 this year. We made some changes to multiple supply and equipment lines

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		equipment is purchased with this line? Will the decrease have a negative impact on SPED programming/instruction?	based on actual needs and historical usage over the past few years. There will be no impact on special education programming.
23.	KD	1110 SW: There is \$165,000 budgeted for curriculum. Is this for curriculum writing? Will curriculum writing continue in the area of ELA given the possible purchase of a program? What other areas do you anticipate curriculum writing will be needed? Is the bulk of it completed over the summer?	Yes, this pays for all curriculum writing. Additionally, it pays for any before or after-school paid committee work as well as certain district stipends such as mentoring, TEAM District-Facilitator, and Chemical Hygiene Officer. We are currently considering curriculum proposals for the majority of our subject areas including ELA Grades 3 - 12. Much of the curriculum writing occurs during the summer, but some of it is written after school during the school year.
24.	KD	1210 SW curriculum- There is a \$1000 decrease in this line. Why? What are the roles of the tutors?	We have been carefully watching our tutoring line. We have decreased the overall amount of tutoring support while still trying to provide programming for our students. Students receive tutoring for medical reasons, expulsion, and occasionally extra support to meet their academic needs.
25.	KD	6110 SW curriculum- There is an increase in this line. What instructional supplies are purchased? Why the slight increase?	See answer #18
26.	CM	In your presentation I believe you stated that we are spending \$841,000 more in placements, not including transportation. What would it be with transportation? And since our vans are already at capacity, how much will this affect us?	Mrs. Variale corrected me during the presentation. The \$841,000 reflects both tuition and transportation.

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27.	KD	<p>In the tech department, what is the role of the communications and research service? It has been zeroed out in previous years. The same can be said for the secretary, tech supplies, and software subscriptions. Please explain.</p>	<p>Communication and Research Services (5304) is a new object code. This line includes telephone and voice communication services; data communication services to establish or maintain computer-based networking, and internet services; one-way or two-way video communications; and licenses for subscriptions to research materials over the internet (such as databases). The increase is due to subscriptions and services being reclassified to this budget line.</p> <p>Please see questions #12, #13, and #17 for information about Tech Supplies and Software Subscription reclassifications.</p> <p>The secretary position was funded by restructuring the IT department and decreasing the number of student technicians. It reflects a shift in funding and positions. The Board approved this restructuring after a vacancy allowed us to reevaluate our structure, job responsibilities, and compensations. The Secretary of Technology Operations has taken on the clerical work that fell on IT staff, allowing them to focus on technical responsibilities.</p>
28.	CM	<p>With a 62+ student increase, how much do you think that COVID has played a part in the numbers going up? Approximately how many children are behind because of the loss in instruction? Is adding only 5 additional paras going to be even close to enough?</p>	<p>There was an increasing trend in special education students even prior to COVID (see #15).</p> <p>However, yes, COVID has played a part in the increase in students with IEPs in preschool and early elementary school. Many of these students have significant disabilities (for example, Autism) and did not receive strong early intervention services prior to entering preschool.</p> <p>The 5 paraeducators currently work in our schools and are funded by a grant that will be ending in June. We cannot lose these positions; we will need these positions next year. This will be an issue again next year, when ESSER grant funding ends.</p>
29.	CM	<p>I believe you stated that Bethel has the highest class size in the region. How many SPED kids on average is a</p>	<p>I made that comment based on previous data that I have seen regarding class size in the region. I can get updated information to present to the board for the next workshop. Special education students are individually placed based on their</p>

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		classroom teacher expected to handle at a time? And how does this affect the learning environment?	needs. Typically, it is below 25% of the total class. There are some settings, particularly collaborative settings (a regular and special education teacher teaching together), where the percentage is higher, but we always keep the percentage below 50%. The ratio of special education students to regular education students is appropriate.
30.	SC	How much special education reimbursement do we get from Medicaid?	In the fiscal year 2022, we received \$34,449.50. We use that money to fund paraeducators, as well as services, equipment, and professional learning that are not provided for in our operating budget.
31.	KD	A 10-year study is less accurate in enrollment the more you go out. So a year from now is more accurate. What is the projection for next year?	NESDEC projected our 2023-2024 enrollment would be 3231 students, which is below our 1/6/2023 enrollment of 3267.
32.	KD	When thinking about consumables, supplies, textbooks, etc, do you often pay for extra? Do you need to purchase anything additional during the school year?	We anticipate for population growth by purchasing a little more so we do not have to purchase instructional consumables during the year. Often times materials come in packs allowing for some extras. We do have to purchase additional paper and supplies throughout the year.
33.	KD	With the loss of 1 specialist, and 6 tutors, how will the need of students needing additional support in Math, Literacy, and EL be addressed?	Our specialists and interventionists will do their best to serve as many needs as possible; otherwise, classroom teachers will need to support their students.
34.	JL	What are the curriculum tutors and why is it decreased? Line 100.16.2210.101.1210	Please see question #24.
35.	JL	Why the large decrease in curriculum instructional supplies on line 100.16.2210.101.6110?	There wasn't a decrease . The line went up \$2,500. See answer #18.

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36.	JL	What is the increase in FTE on secretaries-sw-technology line 100.16.2230.119.1214?	Please see question #27.
37.	JL	Can I assume the decrease in line purchased prof & tech services and the increase in line tech supplies & software subscriptions are linked?	Yes, this is an accurate assumption. The reclassification in the proper object code resulted in a shift of funding amongst lines.
38.	JL	Please explain what the line communications and research serv 100.16.2230.119.5301 is for as it is new.	Please see question #27.
39.	JL	Certified staff for SPED does not list FTE and I assume the staff is included in each building but how many FTE are actually SPED? Is there any increase for this budget?	<p>11 School Counselors 3 BCBA's 4 School Psychologists 2 Occupational Therapists 1 Physical Therapist 6.4 Speech and Language Pathologists (proposed) 5 Social Workers 3 Special Education Administrators 39 Special Education Teachers 5 Special Education Secretaries</p> <p>Please note some of these positions are charged to grants. Yes, all salaries were adjusted to meet contractual obligations.</p>
40.	JL	In SPED the Behavior Analyst line has a 7.70% increase but the same FTE is this from wage increase or are we using outside BCBA's still?	<p>Of the 3 BCBA's, only 1 was a 12-month employee. As a result, we previously contracted BCBA services for Extended School Year (summer).</p> <p>We are shifting from two 10-month BCBA's and one 12-month BCBA to two 12-month BCBA's and one 10-month BCBA. We will no longer be contracting for</p>

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			BCBA support in the summer.
41.	JL	Why is the reference materials line zeroed out?	Changes were made based on actual needs and historical usage.
42.	JL	Why the large cut to Equipment Instructional line 100.16.1200.101.7303?	See question #22.
43.	JL	Do we have a large drop in homebound instruction as I see the line is cut by \$30,000.00?	See question #24
44.	JL	Is the increase in the excess cost line because of the increase in spending or expectation of the state paying 100%	The Increase in excess cost corresponds to the increase in special education spending. In addition, we expect legislative action this session to make adjustments to the tier thresholds. Currently, Bethel is reimbursed at the 73% rate, given changes in the 2022 legislative session. Even if they remove the tiers we could expect to see more reimbursement. It is unlikely it will be reimbursed at 100%.
45.	JL	We have been at 3.9 social workers for years I worry this is not enough to cover all the needs that have increased over the years, when was the last time we increased?	The 3.9 FTE is what is charged to the budget. We actually have 5 social workers. We increased the number of Social Workers from 4.4 to 5.0 in 2020. The additions are being funded through grants.
46.	JL	I see the .4 increase in speech staff and I am worried with the growth in preschool who mostly all get speech that this is not enough. How many students/hours are they servicing? Also how large are the preschool classes getting with the increase?	We are constantly monitoring caseloads for speech and language. Preschool classes vary. The current range in class size is 12 to 16. Currently, we have 3 full-day and 2 half-day integrated preschool teachers. We also have a self-contained preschool class. Next year we likely will shift to additional half-day sections to accommodate more students and to ensure developmental appropriateness.

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47.	JL	With the growth in SPED students over this last year are we budgeting enough not to have to freeze the budget like our current situation? The outplacement costs are large, but necessary and hard to plan for. Is there anything we can do?	Except for the Special Education department, all departments and schools have been held to a flat budget, not including contractual salary and benefits increases. Meeting these budgets will be challenging. The biggest risk would be needing additional outplacements. Every year we do an analysis of the number of students who are currently outplaced and those students who might require outplacements. We budget based on that projected analysis.
48.	MO	Last session we were told that some lines had shifted from prior years. It would be helpful to have that in writing.	Accounting reclassifications impact spending by object code. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New Supplies Code: Tech Supplies & Software Subscriptions (6000) ● Reclassified technology expenses previously in Professional Services (3000) and Equipment (7000) to the new Software Subscription code (6000). ● Moved Research Database Expenses from Library Supplies (6000) to Research Services (5000).
49.	MO	Some foundational questions for the public. Please explain what is meant by Tier 1 intervention. And what is the next step if it isn't successful? What type of needs trigger the supports provided by an interventionist?	Tier 1 intervention involves a classroom teacher providing differentiated grade-level instruction (extra supports and instruction) for a student. If we are not meeting the needs of a student through differentiated instruction, more targeted instruction and supports are provided, through a pull-out and/or push-in Tier 2 model. In this case, we may find a student who can be more than a grade level below, or a student performing below expectations on standard and nonstandard measures requiring more specialized instruction with more regular progress monitoring.
50.	MO	For the 165 Johnson and BMS students needing an interventionist, funded by ESSER II grant, how will they be impacted if the positions aren't included in the budget? And how will those students attain grade level and/ or improve achievement?	We will need to prioritize needs and assign our specialists and tutors to our most at-risk students needing intervention services. Classroom teachers will then need to support the other students through differentiated instruction (explained in answer #49)

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51.	MO	Please explain the comment in the budget presentation that the failure to provide adequate intervention early on to students is more costly in the long run.	If students do not receive the additional support/intervention needed, the achievement gap can get wider and may result in special education services for students which is more costly in the long run.
52.	MO	There were many questions about staff capacity to manage growing needs and numbers of SPED students. Please comment about keeping and retaining adequate qualified staffing.	Special Education Teachers have been a shortage area for many years. We do see more turnover of staff in this area, especially with paraeducators. Factors that retain staff include having the resources to do their job and the culture and climate of the district. With that said, pay and benefits are important to staff.
53.	MO	What can the District do to attract and retain all staff in the current environment of shortages and increased demands on teachers, administrators, and support staff?	Continue to fund appropriate resources in alignment with our Strategic Plan. See question #52.
54.	MO	Is the new organization and workflow of IT managing the workload better? Is staffing sufficient for current District needs?	Careful hiring has resulted in highly effective employees that are improving the department workflow. The retirement of the Supervisor of IT Infrastructure & Operations has impacted the workload. As we look for a replacement we have divided up job responsibilities within the department and are working with contracted services. The two student technicians that we allocated funding for the remainder of this fiscal year have been critical during this transition. We are prioritizing our work and strategically planning projects over time. As technology needs continue to grow, we are evaluating our systems, automating if possible, and exploring software that could assist with streamlining processes.
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