

**Public Hearing of 2020-21 SPS Budget**  
Somers Elementary School Auditorium  
March 09, 2020  
6:00 PM

**Attendance Taken at 6:00 PM:**

Present Board Members: Krista Cherry, Sarah Bollinger, Marissa Marks, Bruce Devlin, Jan Martin, Jeremy Anderson, Kate McLellan, Anne Kirkpatrick

Absent Board Members: David Palmer

Others: Brian Czapla, Bill Boutwell, Dr. Denise Messina, Dr. Irene Zytka, Rob Wilson, Margot Martello, Mike McDonnell, Todd Rolland, Katrina Danby, Gary Cotzin, Cheryl Gustafson, Kim Constant, Lee Mailhot, Bill Meier, Dina Senecal, Melissa Mucci, Elizabeth O'Toole

Updated Attendance: Sarah Bollinger was updated to present at: 6:08 PM

**1. Public Hearing on Somers Board of Education Budget for 2020-2021**

**Rationale:** The Board will listen to the public on the 2020-21 Board of Education Budget.

**Discussion:** Superintendent Czapla presented the approved BOE budget for 2020-2021 to the public. He stated that over the past couple of years all budget decisions were made responsibly. The Strategic Plan was developed last year by community members, parents, and school district personnel. The Strategic Plan is the roadmap for SPS for the next five years. All budget decisions must be supported by the three goals of the Strategic Plan: creating student achievement, professional learning for staff, and accountability from students, staff, administrators, and the superintendent.

Somers was not performing as well as the rest of the districts in DRG-C in 2018. As the Strategic Plan was being developed, SES made significant gains as compared to DRG-C. This year, SES earned "school of distinction" by the CT State Department of Education for their improvements.

Mental health needs impact student achievement. Somers and the nation have seen an increase in the special education/504 caseload. Special education identifications have increased in ADHD, autism, emotional issues as well as DCF/Foster placements and homeless students.

Budget priorities include increasing student achievement and educational opportunities; providing students with mental health resources; and continuing to update and maintain all facilities.

Superintendent Czapla proposed a budget of \$24,689,970 for 2020-2021. This is an increase of \$805,833 from last year's budget with an overall 3.37% increase. Between

January and the end of February, there was a cost reduction of \$103,000 in the OPEB fund (\$28,000 savings) as well as a \$75,000 reduction in healthcare insurance.

The budget is comprised of non-discretionary items which are the contracts and/or general obligations that may not be negotiated. The top drivers in this category are salaries and insurance accounting for \$21 million of the overall budget. Also included in this category are tuition for special needs students as well as magnet schools, transportation with First Student, and utilities. Non-discretionary items lock in at \$22,767,369 (92.2% of the budget).

The budget is also comprised of discretionary items. These items have more budget flexibility. This category includes maintenance (\$553,715); instructional resources (\$448,270); technology and ancillary equipment (\$371,540); extracurricular (\$324,731); and administrative overhead (\$224,345) totaling \$1,922,601 or 7.8% of the budget.

Significant impacts include a \$661,276 increase from last year's budget:

- Labor contracts
- BOE approval for SHS school counselor, MBA Math Interventionist (will have \$0 net input), and MBA School Psychologist (funded through a grant)
- Insurance and benefits (locked in at 12% health premium increase at \$208,700)  
The first budget presented in January called for an 18% increase.
- Special Education tuition reduction (-\$20,000)
- Transportation increase of \$49,970
- Increase of \$6300 in utilities.

Instructional resources/academic achievement total \$110,520. This accounts for textbooks and programming. This includes the continuation of the next phase of the SES Fountas & Pinnell program. New SES and MBA math programs and textbooks will be implemented. The new Capstone program and expansion of AP courses will occur at SHS. Departmental supplies will account for \$28,720. Science equipment will be replaced and modernized. There is also a music replacement plan over the next ten years.

Significant requests that were not included in this proposed budget but may be added to future proposed budgets include:

- Part-time Kindergarten Paraeducators due to significant increases in enrollment
- District-wide 504 Coordinator
- Grade 2 Teacher
- SHS Social Studies Teacher to support AP courses
- Safety and Security Officer
- Pre-K Transportation
- Miscellaneous Capital Outlay
- Tech Support Specialist
- Maintenance and Security special projects
- SES Building Substitute

Superintendent Czapla compared the Per Pupil Expenditure (PPE) of Somers, DRG-C (district reference group representing districts with the same socioeconomic status as Somers), and the State of CT. PPE is the cost per student. The PPE in Somers is \$16,718; \$19,431 in DRG-C; and \$18,791 in the State of CT. Somers falls in the lower 10-15% of DRG-C. If Somers had the same PPE as DRG-C, Somers would have to add another \$4,000,000 to the budget. If Somers had the same PPE as the State of CT, Somers would have to add an extra \$3,000,000 to the budget.

Superintendent Czapla stated the ways in which costs were avoided through recent contract negotiations, energy conservation initiatives, van transportation contract, medical insurance provider change, and specialized programming at SES to meet the needs of certain students so that they would not have to be outplaced.

Chairman Devlin opened the floor for questions at 6:29 p.m. No questions were asked.

Motion to adjourn the public hearing at 6:30 p.m. passed with a motion by Krista Cherry and a second by Kate McLellan. **8 Yeas - 0 Nays.**

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Jan Martin, BOE Secretary

Date

Shannin Burns, BOE Recording Secretary