

2012-2013 BUDGET Q&A

AON Questions

Q What does AON recommend for stop loss for 2012-2013 budget?

A. We recommend keeping the Individual Stop Loss level at \$300,000. The level was changed on 7/1/2011 (from \$150,000). We only have 6 months experience at the higher level. The lack of large claims (to date) will favor the BOE with the level at \$300,000.

Q. Where is "good experience" reflected in the report (specific account line)?

A. Line 1 in the renewal calculation for 2011 has experience period claims at \$20,753,638 and the 2012 experience period claims are \$20,817,166. We would have expected 2011 claims to "trend" (medical inflation) at a rate of approximately 10% - instead the claims have remained relatively flat (which we consider "good experience").

Q. What impact did trend of district have on recommendation?

A. Using a trend rate of 7% (instead of 10%) lowered the budget calculation by approximately \$800,000.

Q What impact does increasing funding to 200% have on employees, if any? Please explain if there is an impact.

A. No impact.

Q. Why is the estimated total of healthcare expenses increasing?

A. We expect claims to trend from the 2011 year to 2012/2013. In addition, fixed expenses also increase.

Per Medical Insurance Profit & Loss Summary

Q. Proposed balance for 2012-2013 falls below 125%, why?

A. Projected balance on 6/30/13 is \$3,736,680 which is 2X the IBNR.

Q. Why is IBNR increasing for 2012-2013?

A. We expect the claims in 2012/2013 contract year to increase - therefore the IBNR would also have to increase to meet the expected liability.

Q. Why is Other Income Revenue not higher given the increase in employees % contribution?

A. The contribution (%) has gone up, but it's taken on the allocation rate instead of fully equivalent rates. Also, based on conversations with Caremark, drug rebates are expected to be reduced because of the number of major drugs switching from brand to generic (no rebates on generic drugs).

Q. Please provide breakdown of Other Income Revenue.

A. \$884,778 School Lunch Program, Grants, FMLA, COBRA, \$4,273,900 employee premiums, \$1,416,829 retiree premiums, \$375,000 prescription rebates.

Q. Is \$16,663,772 appropriation, increase \$160,000? AON recommendation?

A. We agree with this figure.

Q. Why has IBNR been consistently the same if experience is better?

A. IBNR is calculated on actual experience, which has remained relatively flat from 2011 to 2012. We expect the IBNR to increase on 6/30/2013 by approximately 6% from the current reserve figure (due to medical trend).

Q. Page 4-5 – Income. The ECC and Pre-school program revenue and expenses are shown in various sections and include SPCH. Can we get a breakdown of the revenue and expense just for the Pre-school and ECC?

A. The projected preschool and ECC revenue generated for the 2011-2012 school year is \$100,000. A breakdown of the expenses for the ECC is on page 105 of the budget book.

The expenses for the preschool at Burr include:

Preschool Teacher = \$77,201

Preschool Paraprofessional = \$17,666

Supplies/Materials = \$5,000

Q. Page 21 – Instructional Services. Was anything cut to make room for the \$25,000 School Climate Survey?

A. No

Q. Page 22 - Contract Services, Code #307 (Senior Course Subsidy). What is this and how does it work? Budget is \$15K per page 63.

A. The Senior Course Subsidy reduces the cost of some Continuing Ed courses for senior citizens. This is a long standing tradition in Fairfield – to make some of the Continuing Ed classes more affordable for our senior citizens. These courses (for which the subsidy applies) are identified in the course booklet each semester.

Q. Page 25 – Transportation. Can you describe the reasons why some costs are carried in the transportation contract line and others carried in the special transportation line? What is the difference?

A. See attached documents.

Q. Page 54. Why is FTE not listed for clerical?

A. The clerical positions are part-time hourly employees and are not counted in FTE. They are reflected on page 123 of the budget book as “part time permanent equivalents”. Each elementary clerical employee works 19.5 hours per week. With two clerks in each building, there will be seven hours and forty-eight minutes of coverage each day.

Q. Page 54. What does Lead Teacher Science do and why is it eliminated?

A. At the elementary level, this was a position that helped to coordinate science-based curriculum needs. It was typically a teacher stipend position. These were eliminated last year when we added the position of Math/Science Teachers. The same at Grade 6 at the middle school level. Grade 6 is the only grade that has this position and it is part of the off set for the new Math Resource model.

Q. Page 54. How many interns are in budget and what is total cost?

A. There are 21 interns in the proposed budget at a total cost of \$294,000.

Q. Page 58 - Personnel Services, Code #129 (Teach Sub-Ext Abs). What comprises personnel services? Was there a one-off need this year that won't be needed next year? 2010-11 actual to budgeted variance was \$337K. Teacher leaves/\$ for sub goes there

- A. Long-term absences are charged against this account which is used to pay for substitutes.
- Q. Page 58 – Personnel Services, Code #129 (Para Sub-Ext Abs). Was there a one-off need this year that won't be needed next year?**
- A. Long-term absences are charged against this account which is used to pay for substitutes.
- Q. Page 59 – Business Services, Code #133 (Custodial Coverage). Not sure what this is?**
- A. Revenue from Food Services - The Food Services Department now funds the custodial time used to clean and take care of the kitchens in all the schools. This was part of the audit findings.
- Q. Page 59 – Degree Changes, Code #135. How is this budgeted? Based on teachers known to be working on advanced degrees?**
- A. The amount budgeted in this account is arrived at through an annual survey of teachers who anticipate degree changes during the proposed budget year.
- Q. Page 59 – Wage and Benefit Reserve. Why is this \$1,029, 044 budgeted in 2010-11 vs. \$628,386 actual and \$347,183 budgeted for 2011-12 vs. \$165,634 actual? Why such variations from budget?**
- A. Wage and Benefit Reserve budget is for unsettled wage increases and benefits for new positions. The amount budgeted is dependent on both factors. Funds are moved through budget transfers to the appropriate salary/benefit accounts as contracts are settled. The \$165,634 estimated expenditure is for the remaining unsettled contracts.
- Q. Page 59. Please provide a breakdown of employees that are covered in Pension and Other Insurance.**
- A. Full-time non-certified employees are eligible.
- Q. Page 63-66 – Utility Services. There seems to be a bigger variation between the increased costs of heating oil from one building to the next. I can understand the increased 30% cost at FWMS due to the buildings addition and Stratfield to go down by 13.5% due to a more efficient boiler, I presume. But, what causes increases at FLHS (24.5%), Burr (15.4%), FWHS (15.3%), while some schools see larger decreases at Dwight (7.4%) and Jennings (5.0%)?**
- A. This is very difficult to explain. There are many factors figured into the utility costs in a single school building, and looking over the entire district to try to determine the rates and estimates per school.
- It is based on school use, capacity and enrollment, reservations and after hour activities, renovation and construction projects, the cooling season, and equipment age and usage. It also has impact when we perform projects and upgrades such as; replace roofs, replace windows, replace boilers and other mechanical projects over the years.
- Q. Page 68 – Maintenance Services, Code #313 (Alternative High School). Is there a reason to look at an alternate space other than St. Emery's?**
- A. No, not at this time. We have an extremely reasonable rate and lease agreement for the amount of space we use. The Alternate High School students and school staff are very happy at this space and believe this is their school. This is important for the occupants. We also have a long term goal of asking the town bodies to purchase the site so we can move the maintenance department, custodial staff, grounds, etc. there.

Q. Page 71-72 – Conference & Travel, Code #319 (Conference Staff Development). Could we get some more detail as to rules (geographic limitations, how many/year, who qualifies, etc.)?

A. Teachers go through their building principal and/or curriculum leader to apply to attend workshops and conferences. Our guidelines are \$300 reimbursement for all expenses such as registration, travel, etc., and we limit it to the tri-state and New England area as much as feasible. Some exceptions are made to the distance if necessary and appropriate. A teacher can apply to go to more than one – but that is strictly a building decision based on the needs of the teacher, building or district.

Q. Page 74 – Professional Development, Code #321 (Professional Growth Tuition). What are the rules for tuition? Who qualifies, how much, minimum achievement to get reimbursed?

A. Certified employees are eligible for tuition reimbursement for up to two courses each year. Prior approval is required as well as a grade of B or higher. Tuition is reimbursed according to the following:

1. Courses that relate to one's teaching assignment are reimbursed at 80% for the first course and 50% for the second course.
2. Courses taken to add an additional endorsement are reimbursed at 33%.
3. Courses approved for a degree change are reimbursed at 25%.

Q. Page 90 - Maintenance/Repair Supplies (Plumbing, Heating, AC Supplies). The budgeted is \$15K less than the estimated actual for last year, and was \$25K different in 2010-11? Should more be budgeted for this?

A. This account greatly depends on what the schools need day in and day out. In the past the account has shown lesser funds needed. More recently the funds required have been higher. We have found that toward the end of the year we have been very close with the funding in this account.

Q. Page 71-72 – Conference & Travel. Why is there a \$6,000+ increase for 'Conference and Travel'?

A. These are increases represented in school-based allocations.

Q. Open Choice. How many students are enrolled, overall, how many new coming in? Can we get a breakdown by school, by grade, for the new students enrolling?

A. Currently there are 62 students enrolled in grades 1-12. We determine the number of students we accept through the program later in the year (around April/May). We typically accept students starting in first grade. We consider the capacity and enrollment of each school and room in the grade level when making these decisions. For example if a school is over capacity (such as Osborn Hill) we would not accept students, and if a school is close to adding a section, we would not accept students (such as first grade in Riverfield where one more student would cause us to add a section).

Q. Is there an increase in the Substitute Teacher stipend? Do you feel like you have a shortage of classroom subs?

A. No rate increases are proposed.

Q. Sports Rental – line 315. What does that constitute exactly, and is skiing included?

A. See attached.

Q. Who is being paid for 'Internal Suspension'? This can't be handled by school staff?

A. Each high school uses a paraprofessional to provide coverage for this program.

Q. Personnel Recruitment. Who are we recruiting and what does \$25K buy us?

A. Funds in this account cover costs of advertising vacancies in newspapers, on-line websites and professional journals. It also covers costs for our online screening tools that are part of our recruitment and selection system for teachers and administrators.

Q. World Language at middle school level increase in supplies. Is this enrollment driven? Do they have textbooks?

A. The extra funds requested at each middle school (between \$1000 and \$1500) are due to the needs of the program. They have all the textbooks needed but these funds are for ancillary materials ordered by the WL teachers in each school. Part of this is also enrollment driven.

Q. Direct Purchase Paper. We always seem to have a district shortage – how is this account down?

A. Approximately 2 years ago (+), schools were challenged to make it to year-end with their paper allocation. At that time we were paying \$28 – \$31/case of paper (economic conditions & purchasing restrictions). Since then, we have negotiated a price under \$26/case and now also have the ability for further discounts due to the new purchasing policy. Schools are also adhering to the district's green initiatives that include paper conservation. At the end of the 2010-11 school year, the majority of schools had a healthy amount of paper in their storage rooms. A small reduction is warranted.

Q. 56560 Professional Books. Sherman up \$1,000 – what is this and why, same with increase at high school 56580.

A. Sherman's increase represents a plan developed by the school principal and staff members to change their professional development strategy for next year. The plan includes book study groups with teachers and paraprofessionals around curriculum and instruction-based topics. Hence, there will be an increase of professional books ordered.

Q. How is a .5 teacher paid \$56,490?

A. This teacher is on the Doctorate Step 24 and works five additional days beyond the ten month teacher work year.

Q. The \$11,200 clerical help in each of the elementary schools represents one person working for how many hours each day? What is the window of time that would then be better covered?

A. The part-time clerical for the elementary schools proposed in the budget represents a work schedule of 19 ½ hours per week. School secretaries typically work 8:30 am - 4:00 pm. Currently, part-time clerks work either 8:30 – 12:30 or 9:00 – 1:00. The additional part-time clerk would work 12:30 – 4:30 (four days a week) and 1:00 – 4:30 (one day a week).

Q. The new middle school (and high school) math resource help: when will this instruction be delivered? How will it impact a student's time spent in other

classes? Is this extra help that a parent requests his/her child receive, or is it assistance at the referral of the classroom teacher?

A. Students will be scheduled on an individual basis coming out of study halls or a Unified Arts class (music, art, tech education, family consumer sciences) with parent permission. They would be identified through classroom assessments and universal screens. Progress will be monitored each term, and students can move back into their Unified Arts class as they improve. If parents have a specific request, that would be considered but it will be a school/team decision based on the math achievement data for that particular student.

Q. Couldn't we split the Osborn Hill Window Replacement project into two parts: \$ 37,440 + contingency + new windows per specifications for Capital Improvement Projects 2012-13? With the understanding that 2013-14 would be budgeted for the July 2013 work of window demolition, asbestos/lead/PCB abatement, clean and prepare existing window openings, caulk and sealant, test and turn over, and warranty? I assume we don't pay for the above until it's done....since it won't be done until the subsequent budget year has begun, doesn't this make sense?

A. No, I don't know about precedent for such projects.

Q. Considering we are only now at 29.43% of our budgeted amount for Conference and Travel for 2011-2012, why does that number need to increase by \$6,634 for 2012-2013?

A. The increase here is the total from all of the school sites as budgeted from the allocations by the building principals based on the needs at their schools. The district level accounts in this line are unchanged.

Q. Considering what we are paying for out of district tuition: where it involves a special needs student needed services not available in Fairfield, is it worth looking at exactly what the service is that is being provided, and assessing if we might not be better off hiring someone to do this? These are known students with known needs.

A. Each year we consider the need to "create" new programs internally to address the needs of these students. Most recently we created the Student Support Centers for students significantly impacted by autism. This program provides very high quality services to students who, in the past, would have required costly out of district programs. The majority of students currently placed out of district experience significant mental illness issues that impact both behavior and learning and require a very high level of staffing and psychiatric support to address their needs. Approximately 50% of the students are in residential placements and require 24 hour professional support to access educational opportunities. While we could create programs internally, they would be very costly and would also require space that is currently not available. In order to create the 24 hour supports of a residential program, we would need to address 2-3 shifts of mental health staff and support and adequate space to house a program 24 hours per day/365 days per year.

Q. Page 20 - Would it be more cost effective to hire an occupational or physical therapist, as opposed to hiring a private contractor?

A. Given the size and complexity of the school district, it is more cost effective to manage the staffing through a contract than to hire our own staff. Issues beyond salary and benefits

include: long-term substitutes for absences, liability/malpractice insurance, clinical supervision/evaluation, licensing by the BOH (inclusive of ongoing professional development), etc. As a practice, we reconsider this every 3-4 years to look at the possibility, and the costs out way the benefits. It is a more costly model.

Q. Will the new school system we're pursuing also have a software component for doing the work in conjunction with the Safe School Climate, in terms of keeping track of student interventions, or is that something separate for which we'll eventually be asked?

A. The new Student Management system has not yet been selected, but the early assessments indicate that there are many tools that will help us in our work.

Q. Page 20 - Why are we paying for "Student Achievement Intervention"? Why isn't this action (part of RTI?) covered by our current staff?

A. These funds (\$10,000 total) cover additional programs and materials across all the schools to assist in the implementation of interventions. One example is that each high school now runs an after school homework support class to assist students as needed. We have also run before school help in some schools. In all cases, it is our own staff implementing these interventions, but they are usually before or after hours.

Q. Page 22 - Why is the Board of Education providing funds for courses for senior citizens? Shouldn't that be handled elsewhere in the town budget?

A. The Senior Course Subsidy reduces the cost of some Continuing Ed courses for senior citizens. This is a long standing tradition in Fairfield – to make some of the Continuing Ed classes more affordable for our senior citizens. These courses (for which the subsidy applies) are identified in the course booklet each semester.

Q. Couldn't more of our District Professional Development be done by our own staff? They need to have TIME allotted to this; I don't understand almost \$700,000.

A. These funds are detailed on page 73 + 74. A large portion of this (\$230,000) is for tuition reimbursement as required in the teacher contract – for when teachers go back to school to take courses. The other large chunk of this comes from the 13 program areas in the Program Implementation budgets. This is titled Professional Development, but in fact the number next to each department represents both the professional development and curriculum development needs for that department. It is a combined total. Again, these numbers reflect the needs of the department for next year based on their schedule for curriculum revision and for their professional development needs for all of the teachers PreK – 12 in each department. The Staff Development Line (\$69,500) is a general account to cover some of the other departments not represented in the program implementation lines (e.g. Gifted, ELL) as well as the training needed for new teachers (Year 1 + 2) currently enrolled in the TEAM process (formerly BEST).

Q. What role is fulfilled by the elem. school Instruction Improvement Teachers that is NOT fulfilled by our Curriculum Coordinators and school principals?

A. Elementary school IITs serve a very different function from Curriculum Coordinators (and Curriculum Leaders) and school principals. IITs are teachers and not administrators.

Curriculum Leaders in Language Arts and Mathematics serve all eleven schools plus the ECC on district-wide (with about 239 PK-5 teachers) curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional development issues. Curriculum Coordinators are part-time teachers that have release time for their coordinating duties across the district in areas such as Art, Music, PE, etc. There is a .5 IIT assigned to each building (with the exception of McKinley that has 1.0). Over the past couple of years, the role of the IIT has shifted to focus more on providing intervention services directly to students, coordinating, in partnership with the principal, school improvement efforts, coordinating/organizing/facilitating intervention and data teams, coordinating school-wide assessments, and conducting building level and district-wide professional development that supports district initiatives and building needs.

Q. Why do Burr and McKinley (2 of our 3 newest schools) have 3 custodians each, unlike all the others who have fewer?

A. Square footage of the schools.

Q. I don't understand the over half million for Special Education Trainers.

A. Special Education Trainers are a group of non-certified staff members in whom we have invested significant training in the science of Applied Behavior Analysis. They are individuals who provide ABA services to the Student Support Center (SSC) Program for students severely impacted by Autism and related disorders. These individuals are part of a comprehensive program that allows us to maintain these students in district schools. Overall the services we provide are better and the costs associated with the SSC are lower than if the students were placed in private placements (in our most recent comparisons difference in district cost vs. tuition for the same students is, on average - \$30,000 not including transportation).