



Rochester Board of Education
Beatriz LeBron
Board Commissioner
131 West Broad St · Rochester, NY 14614

Date: May 7, 2020

To: Lynda Quick
Deputy Superintendent

From: Commissioner Beatriz Lebron
Chair, Finance Committee

Re: Board Final Memo for the 2020-21 RCSD Budget

Historically, the final Board budget memo indicates points of contention in the proposed budget, wherein which the Administration might address to ensure a favorable vote. This typically includes making possible additions or reductions to program and administrative budget lines. At this point in time, the most important charge for the Board is to ensure that City Council receives a balanced budget in a timely manner. As such this memo, instead of making demands, is intended to call attention to District's obstacles during the current budget year, document the collective points of agreements between the Commissioners, and highlight the areas of concern as pointed out by the students, parents, staff, and community members in their various addresses to the Board.

The current 2020-21 budget process has not been typical. The 2019-20 academic year began with the unveiling of an unprecedented budget deficit that, by itself, already crippled the upcoming budget. However, this was not the only challenge faced, as the District was soon grappling with the Covid-19 pandemic, which has shuttered schools for the remainder of the academic year, and caused further fiscal impact. Along with this pandemic, Districts across New York State, including ours, were made aware of reduced state aid, where there had been projected revenue increases. The Board then had to contend with the sudden and unforeseen departure of the District's Superintendent and an impending superintendent search. It goes without saying that this budget season has been extraordinarily challenging.

Prior to the Budget Review process, the Board identified eleven (11) priorities to guide the preparation of the final 2020-21 RCSD Budget Proposal:

1. Maintain current funding levels to support restorative practices throughout the District
2. Carry out and fund supports needed to fulfill the recommendations of the Special Education Advisory Committee and the Consent Decree on Special Education
3. Reorganize Central Office to realize reductions to Central Office staff
4. Reduce consultants' budget lines/ reduce unnecessary contracts
5. Reduce staff travel
6. Equitable allocation of Special Education and MLL students across District schools
7. No cuts to current student mental health supports, school counselors and social workers
8. Replacement of Spanish speaking staff in schools
9. Renegotiate to reduce Supplemental Health Insurance
10. Reduce Chief Positions
11. No cuts to extracurricular activities (athletic & non-athletic)

The Board's goal is to ensure that the values set forth in these Board priorities reflect the mission to provide all students equitable access to a high quality education and graduate students who are prepared to become productive members of society. We are committed to supporting cultural and linguistic diversity, deep student engagement, and the pursuit of lifelong learning and are that the budget priorities are held at the highest standard. That being said, as the 2020-21 budget season unfolded, and the challenges faced made even more evident, the Board also strongly voiced support for social workers, social and emotional supports for students, the arts, and equitable cuts across District schools. While many of these positions were reinstated in the proposed budget, the Multiple Language Learner (MLL) and Foreign Studies position, which the Board strongly supported, was not.

The role of public voice has been very important throughout this deliberation process. The public weighed in on the budget via several public statements in-person, in writing, and via Zoom. This year, for the first time, the Board facilitated a budget training workshop (February 20th) and a budget webinar (April 2nd) to provide the community with a better understand of District budgetary practices and processes. Public input was received at these events, as well as at the April 14th budget hearing, and other special meetings. Students, parents, staff, and community members noted the potential negative impact of proposed cuts to the arts/music department and voiced their support for retaining District social workers, full special education provisions, as well as keeping the traditional structure for the Rochester International Academy (RIA).

While the District's resources remain limited, the Board is committed to passing a budget that will support the students in the District, while maintaining fiscal responsibility. It is for these reasons that following extensive deliberation and negotiation, there will be no further asks of District Administrative and Budget team. Please accept this memo as a commemoration of the Board's budgetary principles and the actions taken to ensure that these are carried through.

To close, we want express gratitude to you Lynda for taking the helm, and to senior cabinet members, especially our Chief Financial Officer Robert Franklin and Budget Director Brian Pack, for your dedication and leadership following the departure of the Superintendent during the most critical time of this 2020-21 budget process. Secondly, we want to say a heartfelt thank you to the East EPO leadership, especially Superintendent Shaun Nelms, and CFO Carleen Pierce for all their hard work and continued support for the children and families in this District. Thank you for working closely with us to close the budget deficit. Finally, we want to extend our gratitude to the Board staff, Marisol Ramos-Lopez, Kallia Wade, and the communications department staff, especially Tom Moughan.

Thank you.

Cc: Board Members
Chief of Staff, A. Lehner
Chief Financial Officer, R. Franklin
Budget Director, B. Pack
East EPO Superintendent, S. Nelms
East EPO CFO, C. Pierce
East EPO Assistant Superintendent, L. Washington
Board Clerk, M. Ramos-Lopez
Community Liaison Specialist, K. Wade