BUDGET QUESTIONS
BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
January 4, 2016

Facilities Budget Presentation:

1. How did you arrive at a projected 25% reduction in natural gas prices?
   A: The projection is based on current natural gas prices. The cost of natural gas has been averaging approximately 30% less than last year.

2. Can natural gas prices be locked in?
   A: In Connecticut, the best price has always been through Eversource. However, with the current state of energy markets, we will be looking at whether or not it makes sense to lock in natural gas prices as we do for electricity generation.

3. Why is electricity usage projected to be higher next year?
   A: The projection is based on actual usage. The projection for this year was too low. Also, the increased use of technology is one factor why electricity usage has increased.

4. Does someone from the state inspect the state required playground maintenance work?
   A: No; however, the district has a licensed inspector inspect the playgrounds for safety compliance.

5. What is the estimated cost for the sidewalk repairs?
   A: $15,000 for Spaulding and $12,000 for Suffield Middle School

6. Why is the percentage increase at SMS so much higher than the other schools?
   A: The increase is due to the sidewalk repairs and restructuring of the custodian assignments throughout the district which changed FTEs at individual schools, but not total district FTEs.

Technology Budget Presentation:

1. Is the E-Rate reimbursement independent of any grant the district may receive?
   A: Yes

2. What are hosting services?
   A: These are any services the district does not host internally.

3. What is Talent Ed?
   A: Talent Ed is an online tool for teacher observation and evaluation. The district is currently using Bloomboard, which is the State program. Bloomboard is not user-friendly as reported by many teachers and administrators. PEDC has also noted its deficiencies. Talent Ed is customizable and a subcommittee of PEDC will be looking at the program closely and will help design the program.

4. Is there an annual fee for Talent Ed?
   A: Yes; the cost decreases after the first year

5. What is IEP Direct?
   A: IEP Direct is a web-based software program for special education that replaced IEP Plus. IEP Direct is superior to IEP Plus because data is stored in the program; it is no longer housed in the district. It is also easier for teachers and administrators to use and from which to extract meaningful data, and IEP Direct connects to the State for more efficient and accurate state reporting.

6. What is School Messenger?
   A: School Messenger is an electronic notification system. It will replace the K-12 Alert system we are currently using.

7. What means of feedback from staff did you use to establish the technology budget goals?
   A: Feedback from the district survey, help desk tickets data, feedback from leadership and cabinet meetings, and feedback from PEDC and technology committee meetings all helped to establish the budget goals.

8. Do teachers set personal technology goals?
   A: There is a formal technology goal in the CCT that teachers can set; however, in general all teachers have informal technology goals and are eager to get the professional development needed to enhance their use of technology in the classroom.

Transportation Budget Presentation:

1. Are the late buses utilized?
   A: The number of students fluctuates depending on the after school programs. For example, when it is cross country season at the middle school, the after school buses are full.

2. Why is gas and diesel broken out in the budget?
   A: Gas and diesel are not part of the bus contract and therefore are a separate expense. The bus company can include the cost of fuel in their contract but it is less expensive for districts to buy fuel separate from the bus contract.

3. Will reducing a bus affect pick up and drop off times for students next year?
   A: When evaluating whether to reduce buses, the district will look at the number of students per bus, the number of stops, and the length of the bus run. M&J has worked very hard at picking up and dropping off students on time and reducing one bus should not affect pick up and drop off times.