



To: Bethel Selectman & Board of Finance

From: Dr. Christine Carver, Superintendent of Schools

Date: April 10, 2020

RE: Considerations for 2020-2021 Budget

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As you deliberate, we wanted to provide you with the impact of any future reductions to the [Board of Education](#) operating budget. At our presentation, we already spoke about the district being at a crossroad. While we know that there is real concern about the status of the economy, we caution you to recognize the long term implication of significant reductions. In addition to all the significant challenges we described in our budget presentation, including: (1) increased enrollment, (2) increased elementary class size (elementary classes of 26-28 students), (3) more challenging demographics which require more supports, and (4) the social-emotional needs of our students, the closure due to COVID-19 has added a new layer to potential issues/exposures:

- While we commend our staff for doing a phenomenal job (given the circumstances), we anticipate that our students will have academic gaps starting the 2020-2021 school year. The virtual services we are providing do not equate to the experiences we provide in a classroom. We will have more of a challenge making up for those deficits. Further reductions could have lasting impact on a generation of children.
- Education is an asset to the fiscal health of the community. Long-term implications of increased class sizes, failure to provide adequate intervention services, and stripping of what have become core programs within our schools will deteriorate our system and negatively impact our community.
- We have dedicated staff who always exceed expectations. They can work in surrounding communities, which provide better compensation. They choose to stay with us because of our culture. Reductions in staff and creating increased expectations will affect morale and our culture which could drive teachers to look towards more affluent districts. This will exacerbate an already existing issue.
- We were required by Governor Lamont's [Executive Orders](#) to pay the majority of our contracts and labor expenses, despite our school closure. Therefore, it will limit the potential for the end of the year savings that might have helped to mitigate the situation.

- While we made the best of the circumstances, we were not able to replicate all of our services for students with disabilities. We likely will have to provide additional services in the next fiscal school year, as required by state and federal law.
- Reductions will result in layoffs and loss of positions. 85.4% of our operating budget is salaries and benefits. The district, like municipalities, does not pay into unemployment. Therefore, we would be required to pay up to 60% of the unemployment expenses. This would not only significantly impact the services our students receive, but also perpetuate economic downturn.

We wanted to provide you an idea of what potential reductions could be in terms of loss of positions and/or lay offs. We could not make any reductions in special education, as we are mandated, by state and federal law, to provide those programs. We have to provide transportation to our students, St. Mary's, Nonnewaug, and Abbott Tech. Between staff, special education, and transportation, there is not a lot of discretionary spending. We wanted to provide you with a look at what the impact would be if we have significant reductions. The first chart provides an overview of the salaries we are basing our assumptions on:

<b>Costs:</b>	<b>Salary</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Total</b>
Administrators	125,400.00	21,000.00	146,400.00
Teachers	56,792.00	21,000.00	77,792.00
Paraeducators	23,500.00	18,500.00	42,000.00
Sec'y 12 month	50,470.00	21,000.00	71,470.00
Sec'y 10 month	35,900.00	21,000.00	56,900.00
Nurse	59,454.00	21,000.00	80,454.00
Custodian	55,665.00	21,000.00	76,665.00
Unaffiliated	65,000.00	21,000.00	86,000.00

This table provides you with an overview of the cuts needed to get to a 3% increase over last year's operating budget (currently at 3.78%):

<b>Scenario #1 - Get Budget to 3%</b>	
This would be: <input type="checkbox"/> 5 Teachers or <input type="checkbox"/> 9.5 Paras or <input type="checkbox"/> 5 Combination Admin, Teach, Secy, Nurse, Cust, Unaffiliated	<b>(391,870.00)</b>

This next table provides you with an overview of a 2% increase over last year's budget.

<b>Scenario #2 - Get Budget to 2%</b>	
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This would be: <input type="checkbox"/> 11 Teachers or <input type="checkbox"/> 20 Paras or <input type="checkbox"/> 12 Combination Admin, Teach, Secy, Nurse, Cust, Unaffiliated	<b>(856,025.00)</b>
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So in the first table, if the Board of Education chose to not add the specific four positions proposed by the Superintendent. The total of 1 Administrator, 2 Teachers and 1 Custodian would be \$378,649. To get to 3% another \$13,221 would be needed plus the still unidentified previous BOF reduction of \$30,000 would require that a Paraprofessional or equivalent salary also be eliminated. So reducing the budget from 3.78% to 3.00% would require a combination of 5 positions as stated in the first table. The actual reductions of positions would be decided by the BOE and Administration as these four proposed positions were considered critical to student achievement and the strategic plan.

#### Potential Impacts:

- Limit course offerings at Bethel High School
- Put AP on rotational schedules
- Larger class size, district-wide
- Cuts to electives, specials or enrichment programs (6-12)
- Eliminate core programs which make this community unique

#### Other options which would need to be considered:

- Delaying capital projects for one year
- Increasing pay-to-play
- Consider fees for other extracurricular programs that currently do not have a cost
- Reduction in after school clubs, activities, and programs (i.e., theater, music, etc.)
- Reducing and/or limiting student enrollment in non-mandatory programs