

**Questions Regarding 2016-2017 Superintendent's Proposed Budget**  
**From BOE Special Meeting on December 2, 2015**

1. Please explain the HSA balloon payment/contributions and the savings associated with the plan.  
**RESPONSE:** The District commitment is 50% of the deductible amount, which is to be deposited into a health savings account for individuals electing the high deductible health plan. The savings associated with high deductible health plans is realized over a period of time, where individual's behavior is modified when making health care decisions.
2. Are lunch prices increasing? What will the prices actually be?  
**RESPONSE:** Yes. AHS / AMS / TBS - \$3.25, PGS / RBS - \$3.00
3. Do you expect price increases to impact food sales?  
**RESPONSE:** A small amount in the beginning and then it will bounce back up.
4. Have the food services staff been notified of the recommended changes regarding their health insurance?  
**RESPONSE:** Yes.
5. Since the food service fund balance went down, does it mean the money was spent?  
**RESPONSE:** Yes. As we had a loss, invoices were paid from the fund balance.
6. What is our percentage of free and reduced students?  
**RESPONSE:** 6.5%
7. Will all the schools have breakfast offered? Does this help with costs?  
**RESPONSE:** As of the end of January, all schools will be serving breakfast. Offering breakfast will increase sales slightly.
8. Did staff hours increase when the change was made to make more of the food in-house?  
**RESPONSE:** Yes, slightly. Some part-time workers were given an additional ½ hour.
9. Is offering 20 hours/week staff benefits a food service standard across the districts?  
**RESPONSE:** No, it is very unusual.
10. How has the shared services worked with the three districts in regards to food services?  
**RESPONSE:** It has worked well particularly regarding expenses. Purchasing together and bidding together has helped as well as the district paying 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the director and the administrative assistant's salary and benefits.
11. Are there any food service equipment that you are aware that needs repairing?  
**RESPONSE:** The dishwasher at Roaring Brook, small refrigerator unit at Avon High and a table top cooling unit at Thompson Brook
12. Are food service staff affiliated with any union?  
**RESPONSE:** No.
13. Does the point of sale system offer any useful information as to what kinds of foods to offer/sell to students?  
**RESPONSE:** Yes, it tracks sales by item including a lunch or a la carte items.
14. Are there any updated programs that you think may be more useful to help in food services?  
**RESPONSE:** We updated the POS system a year ago and we are presently in good shape.

15. How is the waste level of food?

RESPONSE: Although still a concern this has improved over the past two years.

16. In regards to facilities, what is the process of the equipment that needs to be repaired?

RESPONSE: Based on the assessment conducted last summer, we submitted repairs to the capital improvement plan.

17. How much of our equipment have we exceeded the “projected life” i.e., the air conditioners at the high school, heating systems, etc.?

RESPONSE: An HVAC equipment summary chart was provided in the CIP presentation. A total of 6 units have exceeded their life expectancy (1 @ AHS, 1 @ TBS, 3 @ PGS and 1 @ RBS).

18. Is there anything budgeted for maintainers to get an “up-tick” increase in their salaries?

RESPONSE: Salaries for custodians and maintainers were based on contractual rates with an applied GWI increase.

19. Where was the landscaping costs included in previous budgets?

RESPONSE: Landscaping was done by maintainers and supplemented by contracted services.

20. Is the landscaping costs offset in another line now that it has its own line?

RESPONSE: No.

21. What is included in landscaping work?

RESPONSE: Spring and fall clean up, weeding, mulching, grass cutting.

22. Will we be using the same landscaping company the Town uses?

RESPONSE: We are looking into this.

23. Is the outsourcing of landscaping primarily to free up custodians and maintainers to do the work within the buildings and address all outstanding work orders?

RESPONSE: Yes.

24. Does the landscaping costs include snow removal services?

RESPONSE: No.

25. Why is a line item needed for substitute custodians? Are we not sufficiently staffed?

RESPONSE: Due to contractual vacancy rates, we average at least one custodian a day absent.

26. Are there any issues or challenges from the union with work being given to a substitute custodian rather than giving the work to union members?

RESPONSE: No.

27. Will the one substitute custodian will be shared between buildings?

RESPONSE: Yes.

28. Is this due to an absence issue and should it be addressed?

RESPONSE: It is due to custodian contract.

29. What precludes a substitute custodian from saying they would like benefits if they are here for an extended amount of time?

RESPONSE: Nothing precludes a substitute custodian from asking.

30. Is the hiring of a substitute custodian in line with the contract?

**RESPONSE:** Yes.

31. Please explain the projected magnet school enrollment and the estimated outplacements and its tuition costs?

**RESPONSE:** Magnet School Projected Enrollment and associated regular education tuition costs are detailed on pg. 42 of the supplemental information packet.

32. Why is there a difference in the estimated outplacement information from September to November?

**RESPONSE:** Outplacement information changes on a regular, sometimes daily, basis. Placement decisions result from PPT meetings, but other factors such as new enrollments and changes in residency, court orders, and hearing decisions can also impact outplacement information. Cases pending from previous months were settled and reflected on the summary.

33. Explain Avon students who attend magnet schools and is determined to need special services. Does Avon have input or control over services recommended?

**RESPONSE:** A student who attends a magnet school receives special education services recommended at the PTT by the magnet school service providers. Although there may be discussion regarding the justification of need for the recommendation(s), there is no control over the delivery of that service or the resulting budget implications such as staffing efficiency and the reallocation of resources. The District is consequently billed for those services without oversight.

34. Please explain the Farmington High School placement. How many students are currently attending Farmington High School? And how is the tuition set? Do we pay for the transportation?

**RESPONSE:** The District was able to secure appropriate programming for a single special education student at a neighboring town. Tuition was agreed upon between the two Pupil Services Directors. The District does not provide transportation for this student to attend programming at Farmington High School.

35. Can a student just choose to attend a different high school?

**RESPONSE:** No; not a public high school. They can choose to attend a private, magnet or charter school.

36. Why is no tuition listed for some of the students attending magnet schools?

**RESPONSE:** Some magnet schools do not charge tuition.

37. If a student is attending a school where there is no tuition costs, are there still costs associated should the student need special services?

**RESPONSE:** Yes, as described in question 33, the same answer applies.

38. Have we had requests from other area districts other than Hartford to have students attend Avon?

**RESPONSE:** No.

39. At the high school, with the collapse of the academic levels, please detail the services provided for students that may need extra help.

**RESPONSE:** Critical Reading Support Class (grade 9), Critical Reading and Writing Support Class (Grade 10), Math Skills Support Classes (Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II), Writing Support, Student Assistance Center, Math Lab, Writing Resource Center. Students that are entitled to special education services receive those services regardless of how the general education model is structured.

40. How does a student access school psychologists at the schools?

**RESPONSE:** School psychologists are accessible to all students. Additionally, students can access support from their guidance counselor who provides services such as referrals for additional assistance, consultation and collaboration with families, teachers, other educators and community organizations.

41. Explain the case loads associated with student service providers.  
**RESPONSE:** Detail regarding caseloads is located on pg. 142 of the supplemental information packet.
42. Do you differentiate between the number of students versus the number of minutes spent on caseloads?  
**RESPONSE:** Caseload refers to the number of students who receive a service from a service provider (i.e. specialized instruction from a speech language pathologist). Workload refers to the amount of time required to deliver that service. Typically, this is calculated in 15 minute increments.
43. What is meant by service delivery?  
**RESPONSE:** Service delivery is the model a district establishes to determine how special education services will be delivered. An IEP team can only recommend service delivery based on the model established by the district.
44. Has Medicaid reimbursement been looked into?  
**RESPONSE:** Yes. The District found it would receive too little in reimbursements to fully implement the systems necessary for tracking Medicaid related data.
45. How do you ensure students with special needs are correctly placed with the collapse of levels? Will this be a sampling or 100% of the students with special needs?  
**RESPONSE:** In order to ensure equal access and opportunity to all students, a historical review of a student's eligibility should be aligned with course requests and the scheduling process. Special education services should be provided based on the identified area of disability.
46. Please explain the grants and how it is related to hiring.  
**RESPONSE:** Most grant funds received by the district are used to fund positions.
47. Do the teachers understand their positions are related to the funding of grants?  
**RESPONSE:** No. We have labor contracts that serve to represent their employment and how it is to be administered. Funding source is irrelevant when it comes to staff longevity.
48. What is the status of the ALP program?  
**RESPONSE:** The ALP program is being defined and developed in an ongoing process. The program description is being finalized, entrance and exit criteria is being established and the delivery of service is being reviewed.
49. What is the ASC program?  
**RESPONSE:** The program is still in draft form and is designed for students with autism who require specially designed learning environments, structured behavior and academic interventions, the development of socially relevant skills, increased independence of functional routines and planned generalization
50. How many students are involved in the ALS and ASC programs?  
**RESPONSE:** The capacity for both programs is 8-10 students. Currently, there are approximately 10 students in the process of placement and program review.
51. Where do we stand with the Choice liaison?  
**RESPONSE:** Due to the loss of funding for the Choice Liaison position, we do not have a District liaison position this year. CREC has provided us with a Support Specialist (who works in multiple districts) and we have reallocated the responsibilities of our Choice Liaison position to different individuals within the district.

52. How do you determine para-educators are needed or assigned? Is it according to IEP?  
**RESPONSE:** At present, para-educators are assigned based on the need identified in the IEP.
53. Are there enough para-educators to address the needs?  
**RESPONSE:** Yes at this time. This is continuously re-evaluated by appropriate staff and is adjusted based upon student need.
54. Is there a list of any changes/reductions to the requests submitted by the principals?  
**RESPONSE:** A list is included on pages 262-264 of the Budget Supplemental Packet.
55. What is the reallocation of technology personnel?  
**RESPONSE:** The current Technology Services Supervisor position has been eliminated and an additional Technology Field Services Technician position added. Also, the Technology Field Services Technician positions will move from 38 weeks to 52 weeks.
56. Is the work with Allison Zmuda completed? How is that funded and what is included in her expenses?  
**RESPONSE:** The work with Allison Zmuda has not been completed. This work is funded from both the Title II grant and the General Budget. The fee of \$2,500 a day includes consulting, travel, lodging, food and unlimited access to her for support, questions, etc. between visits.
57. Is the work with Capturing Kids Hearts completed? Is there a line item for that? What is the estimate cost?  
**RESPONSE:** The Capturing Kids' Hearts training has not been completed. These costs are included as part of the Professional Development District-wide line. The estimated cost for 2016-17 is \$64,000 (1 Capturing Kids' Hears training, 1 Process Champions training and consultation).
58. Explain the property insurance and how increases are controlled.  
**RESPONSE:** Property, liability and workers compensation insurance are overseen by the Town of Avon. The District is implementing new programs based on recommendations made by The Travelers in an attempt to control claims and thus costs in the future.
59. Why were we paying \$20,000 banking fees to Bank of America? Can this be negotiated? Is this common?  
**RESPONSE:** The Board of Education splits all banking fees by 50% with the Town of Avon. This has been the arrangement for many years. Each Town and Board of Education handle their cash accounting in different manners, this is the structure in Avon.
60. What is the property insurance RFP process?  
**RESPONSE:** The current staff at the Board of Education were not made aware of this RFP or new carrier until the implementation had already begun at the end of June. Moving forward, the Board is very pleased to have been invited to offer feedback on RFPs relating to both the Board and the Town in the future.
61. What is the percentage charged by the Town of Avon for bank reconciliation?  
**RESPONSE:** The flat in-kind charge for bank reconciliation services during the fiscal year 2014/2015 was \$17,971.00 as reported in the annual ED001.
62. When will the Interim Director of Pupil Services be able to provide an up to date evaluation of support staffing needs in each building? If it is not going to be ready in time to meet budget deadlines, how will the board be able to make an informed decision with respect to knowing if there are adequate staff to meet projected need?  
**RESPONSE:** The 2016-2017 Superintendent's proposed budget has anticipated staff needs and has been accounted for in the applicable budget lines. As a budget is an estimate of the revenues and expenditures

and is presented in November, there are changes that may be necessary after the budget is approved and adopted. This happens every year and is managed by the administration. If the needs require expenditures beyond what the district budget is able to sustain, the district would contemplate seeking a supplemental appropriation using the established process.

63. It is my understanding from our conversation that APS pays for 7/8 of a School Resource Officer's salary. Where is that line item in the budget? Also, please provide a job description of this position including the number of hours required.

**RESPONSE:** The line item associated with security personnel at AHS is (01.1.2660.112). The District has budgeted \$66,625.00 for the SRO and \$38,000.00 for a Security Guard employed directly by the District.

64. Does the district intend to fill a School Choice Liaison position in 2016-17? It is not listed among the new positions as far as I can see. If there was an identified need, what would an approximate salary and benefit cost be for such a position?

**RESPONSE:** The Choice Liaison position is not included in the 2016-17 budget. The salary and benefit costs associated with this position when it was filled were Home to School Liaison Salary - \$60,669.00, Stipend - \$4,000.00, Travel Allowance - \$2,000.00 and Benefits \$7,861.84. While the Open Choice Academic and Social Support Grant could be used to fund a portion of the Choice Liaison position, these funds have been earmarked in the 2016-17 budget for intervention tutors and teaching assistants.

65. Will the Capturing Kids Hearts professional development be completed at the end of 2015 or will it carry over into the next budget year? Please provide a copy of the Capturing Kids Hearts contract for all purchased services related to this program, as well as sources of funding. Also please provide related financial detail pertaining to substitute costs for all personnel who have attended thus far. My understanding is that a variety of building staff in each school were expected to participate.

**RESPONSE:** The Capturing Kids' Hearts training will not be completed at the end of 2015 and are included in the proposed 2016-17 budget. The goal is to provide this training to all of our employees.

**Questions Regarding 2016-2017 Superintendent's Proposed Budget**  
**Received on December 11, 2015**

1. The number of special education outplacements seems to be rising. Since they are normally high costs items (as compared to teaching "in district"), can you explain why this is happening?

**RESPONSE:** Operationally, tuition costs for out of district placements typically increase 3-5% annually. Additionally, outplacement information changes on a regular, sometimes daily, basis. Placement decisions result from PPT meetings, but other factors such as new enrollments and changes in residency, court orders and hearing decisions can also impact outplacement information. An analysis of out of district tuitions from 2012-2015 does not show a pattern of increase outside of expected or typical variance as shown below:

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Actual Cost</u>	<u>Differential</u>
2012-2013	\$2,106,499.12	+\$119,071.84
2013-2014	\$1,964,953.45	-\$141,545.67
2014-2015	\$2,096,837.76	+\$131,884.31

2. Is it possible to get a breakdown of legal fees by category so we might understand what drives this cost (and if there might be a way to reduce these costs)?

**RESPONSE:** It may take some time given that the legal bills are not sorted by category or by special education and other matters. To prepare an accurate response, we will need to go through each legal bill from Shipman & Goodwin and Murtha Cullina one at a time and calculate each category for a designated time period manually.

3. Do we need someone with an 085 certification to oversee the business office?

**RESPONSE:** No