

Open Work Session

Discussion with Board of Education Regarding One-Time Funding Request

March 17, 2020

Mr. Micah Stauffer, Chief Finance and Operations Officer for Wicomico County Public Schools, and Mr. Jesse Reid, Comptroller for Wicomico County Public Schools, came before Council. Mr. Stauffer said Council should have a copy of a letter that is asking for consideration to be able to send a one-time funding request to MSDE to consider if those requests meet the guidelines of one-time funding requests for MSDE. He said, if there is approval, then that one-time funding request would come back to the County for consideration to add to the budget.

Mrs. Acle said, just for clarification, the things they have listed are \$30,000 for laptop carts at Salisbury Middle for NextGen STEM. She said she knows about this because her son is in the program, and that program is dwindling. She said it was at full capacity, and it is almost cut in half with students at this point. She then asked if the NextGen program is even going to continue, to which Mr. Stauffer responded, he would not characterize that program as dwindling. He said they started the program two years ago with sixth grade at Salisbury Middle School for the NextGen STEM Academy. He said they had two classes of 25 each. He said the following year, which is this year, they then added another grade level of 50 students each in sixth grade, and those sixth graders who then moved up to seventh grade. He said next year they will then phase in a third grade level with the incoming sixth graders so that each one of the grade levels would have two classes of NextGen STEM Academy students. He said this coming year is their last year to phase in the entire program. Mrs. Acle said the STEM program was amazing, but changing to NextGen, there have been multiple issues. She said one is that the student has to have Wi-Fi connection to be part of the program, so if they do not have Wi-Fi at home, they cannot be in the program, so that eliminated a large portion of students from participating, and she knows that with her son's class, probably half of them are gone who started in the beginning because of that. She clarified, not because of the rigor of the program, but the access to materials. She said she is not sure how this is going to help that situation, to which Mr. Stauffer responded, he thinks that information needs to be clarified because he is not 100 percent sure that everything Mrs. Acle said is accurate. He said the program currently allows students on a lottery system, and those students are selected at the beginning of each year until the point where they filled each one of those two classes as they phased students in. He said at no point in time is he aware of any requirement that a student must have Wi-Fi capability to be in the program itself, to which Mrs. Acle responded, she has the written parent packet if Mr. Stauffer wants to see it. Mr. Stauffer responded, that may be something that, again, they could clarify for Mrs. Acle, and he is not sure if that says Wi-Fi capability at home, to which Mrs. Acle responded, yes, they have to have it at home or they cannot participate. Mr. Stauffer said he can make sure that Dr. Briggs and Dr. Hanlin can clarify that information for Mrs. Acle and get back to her. He said, at this point in time, they are planning on moving forward with Phase III of that program so that all three grade levels will have the NextGen STEM Academy and the appropriate resources that are part of that program itself.

Mr. Dodd clarified, this meeting is basically to talk about moving this letter forward, and it does not mean that they are going to vote on it, so they can discuss this when it comes back. Mrs. Acle asked if they have to vote to move forward, to which Mr. Dodd responded, they need a consensus because this is a Work Session. Mr. Cannon explained, the leading paragraph talks about the processes and how

things changed, and he thinks the reason things changed is because Council had actually given the Board \$220,000 in additional one-time only spending, and after that was approved, Council realized that technically the Board cannot get one-time only expenses from Council unless they first apply for it to the State, so that is the reason for this letter. Mr. Stauffer said, even prior to consideration by the Council, they must have the approval from MSDE that these items that are listed would be approvable one-time funding items. He said, should it be approved, they will add it to the budget. Mr. Dodd added, there is a deadline, and Council will not be meeting again prior to that deadline.

Mr. Dodd said he supports this, but the question he has is why is Council just getting this, to which Mr. Stauffer responded, because they wanted to make sure first that they had finalized their budget, which was approved at their last Board meeting a week ago, and then this would be the next step for that consideration following the timeline that is provided to them from MSDE. Mr. Dodd said he wishes they would have sent this to Council right after that meeting, but that is fine, and they are here now, and he supports this. He then asked if they have a consensus to send this letter, to which there was a majority consensus. There was no further discussion.



Larry Dodd, Council President



John T. Cannon, Council Vice President



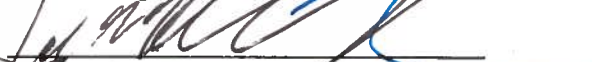
Ernie Davis, District 4



Nicole Acle, District 2



Josh Hastings, District 4



Joe Holloway, District 5

absent

William R., McCain, At-Large



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator