

**GARDNER CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC WELFARE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MARCH 26, 2019**

Councillor Christine Johnson, Chairperson of the Public Welfare Committee, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Mayor's Conference, Room 128. Committee members present were Councillor Elizabeth Kazinskas and Council President Scott Joseph Graves.

Others present and participating were Councillor James Boone, a Gardner Representative to the Monty Tech School Committee; Monty Tech Superintendent Dr. Sheila Harrity; Monty Tech Principal Tom Brown; Monty Tech Business Administrator Tammy Crockett; Gardner School Committee members Robert Swartz and Anne Hurst; and, Assistant City Clerk Faith Glover.

Minutes of Prior Meetings

On a motion Councillor Elizabeth Kazinskas and seconded by President Scott Graves, it was voted to approve the Minutes of the January 31, 2019 Minutes, as printed.

Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School District FY2020 Budget Presentation

Dr. Harrity provided the Committee with a Power Point Budget Presentation (attached hereto). She outlined the following components:

- The construction that has taken place at Monty Tech this year.
- The new programs available for the students.

Ms. Crockett provided the Committee with a Power Point proposed budget for FY20. She outlined the following components:

- \$28,760,202 represents an increase of 3.62% over FY2019.
- The Budget is based on the Governor's Chapter 70 Aid Recommendations.

Councillor Christine Johnson questioned Monty Tech's Excess and Deficiency (E&D) balance.

Ms. Crockett explained "Net School Spending" - with regard to school maintenance, heavy equipment under capital expenditures. Transportation – "contracting-out" 30 buses. MT owns 5 buses for transporting students to athletic events, field trips, and late buses for students that stay late. They will also budget funds to the Stabilization Fund.

Councillor Christine Johnson questioned a \$1.1M carry over.

Mrs. Crockett responded, that \$93 was left over from last year. \$1.1 million is because of:

- Conservative budgeting.
- Budgeted interest revenue increased from a rate of .5% to almost 2%.
- The State funds regional transportation – the State should have funded 100% because the school is regionalized, but only funded 72-73%.
- If the Legislature funds at a higher rate than the Cherry Sheet, the extra money goes into the amount carried over.
- Medicaid revenue (not budgeted) is about \$30 to \$40 thousand/year.

Councillor Christine Johnson questioned the District's practice when the State provides additional Education Aid.

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Ms. Crockett said that they have only the Governor's Recommendations to use to estimate their revenues at this time. As the final State Budget is determined, the School Committee usually returns any extra revenue to the cities and towns in the 4th quarter. The minimum cost per pupil is \$16,898/per pupil. Gardner has 195 pupils. $195 \times \$16,898 = \$3,295,162$.

Councillor Christine Johnson asked, "Regarding the formula on the number of students that can be taken from our district, aren't we over?"

Ms. Crockett: "Yes, it is a quota."

- Students from Gardner have increased from 179 to 195 pupils in Monty Tech.
- Chapter 74, the Practical Nursing Program, has 6 Gardner students participating.
- The number of students that "choice-out" from Gardner/Monty Tech is 4.
- Gardner has 37 assigned slots.
- Quota for Gardner is 10.52% - slots are held for Gardner. After June 1, all the held slots are available. Students are chosen from the wait list with no regard to City or Town – only grades – which is the reason that there could be more students from Gardner than the formula allows.

Councillor Johnson asked whether the Committee could receive the Wait List (no personal information, names or address), but only the numbers of students from the surrounding towns.

Dr. Harrity stated that she will look into whether the list can be shared with the Committee.

Councillor Elizabeth Kazinskas questioned the cost impact.

Ms. Crockett: October 1 is the cutoff date for the State – wherever a student is enrolled on that date is where they will remain for the entire school year. For example, if Gardner has 20 students in Monty Tech on October 1 and two subsequently leave, no students from Gardner can fill these slots.

Councillor Christine Johnson questioned the reason that the City of Gardner is paying for school choice students that are going Leominster via Monty Tech.

Ms. Crockett: Gardner would have to pay more for "out of district" - the cost would be higher for Gardner if they were to pay on their own.

Council President Scott Graves questioned the percentage of graduates that go to college?

Dr. Harrity: Upon graduation,

- 37% attend a 4-year College or University.
- 20% attend MWCC or QCC.
- 31% enter the field or vocation that they studied.
- 5% enter the military.
- 4% unknown.

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President Graves and Councillor Kazinskas suggested that Monty Tech is more like a college preparatory school which, at one time, Monty Tech it was considered a trade school. They noted that there are some students that could benefit from a trade school but are not qualified to go to Monty Tech. Gardner High students are not able to have the benefits of learning a trade.

Dr. Harrity noted that there are evening classes that anyone 18 years or older can attend to learn a trade.

Councillor Kazinskas noted that evening students would have to pay tuition.

Dr. Harrity agreed, suggesting that Monty Tech could look into changing that down the road.

Councillor Johnson suggested that from society's standpoint, plumbers, electricians, and mechanics are needed and students must go to vocational schools to learn these and other trades. The students in the public schools will not have the opportunity that the students at a vocational, technical school have. "Maybe it's time to open up the Agreement to see what can be done for the "C" or the "D" students. Would that be something Monty Tech would be open to?" she asked.

Ms. Crocket suggested that it would be a great conversation to have with the state.

President Graves questioned whether there is any method, or safety net, by which a student who is good with his/her hands but not their grades, could get into Monty Tech.

Dr. Harrity responded, saying that there is not, adding that State Law does not permit any such safety net.

Adjournment

On a motion Councillor Elizabeth Kazinskas and seconded by President Scott Graves, it was voted to adjourn at 7:43 p.m.