

**COMBINED BOARD OF SELECTMAN AND BOARD OF FINANCE
PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING
MINUTES OF MEETING
MARCH 8, 2010**

Pursuant to the call and written notice, the Public Budget Hearing of the Board of Selectman and the Board of

Finance was held on Monday, March 8, 2010 at 7:00 pm in the Board of Education Administrative Offices, Seminar Room 300, 501 Kings Highway East, Fairfield, Connecticut.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chairman Thomas Flynn, Robert Bellitto Jr., Ken Brachfeld, James Brown, Christopher DeWitt, Kevin Kiley, Mary LeClerc, Robert Stone, Michael Tetreau

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Kenneth Flatto, Sherri Steeneck, Board of Selectmen, Town of Fairfield

Paul Hiller, Chief Fiscal Officer and Clerk of the Board of Finance

Linda Gardiner, Budget Director, Town of Fairfield

Sue Brand, Chairman, Board of Education

Bonnie McWain, Director of Finance, Board of Education

Dr. Ann Clark, Superintendent of Schools, Board of Education

John Boyle, Deputy Superintendent of Schools, Board of Education

Dr. Gary Rosato, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Board of Education

Thomas Cullen, Director of Operations, Board of Education

Andrea Leonardi, Director of Special Education and Special Programs, Board of Education

Nancy Nash, Manager, Information Technology, Board of Education

John Ficke, Transportation Supervisor, Board of Education

Chairman Flynn called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

The budgets were reviewed as follows:

8010 Board of Education Dr. Ann Clark and Sue Brand presented this item to the Board.

Mrs. Brand thanked the BOE for their work in preparing this year's budget proposal. Mrs. Brand reported that CAGE has solicited local BOE's opinions, on a voluntary basis, in an effort to determine

what is happening statewide in regards to education. Mrs. Brand stated that the BOE made the decision

to cut the Superintendent's original request from \$144,796,425 to \$144,571,251 and the BOE has included in the budget proposal the costs for an operational audit to be done as soon as possible.

Mrs.

Brand asked the BOF to approve the budget as presented tonight.

Dr. Clark presented a power point presentation and noted that move forward costs this year are 1.86%

and other costs total an additional 2.10% for a total cost of 3.96%. Dr. Clark added that by receiving the

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) funding

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for an additional year, The BOE was able to reduce costs to the Town by .37% resulting in a final cost

increase of 3.59% in this budget proposal.

Chairman Flynn noted that Capital Requests have already been reviewed and considered by the BOF.

Mrs. Brand stated that class size has been a definite priority for the BOE.

Dr. Clark stated that this year the BOE used ARRA funding for 4.4 positions at the elementary level due

to the lack of funding from the Town and the requirement for a large increase in the pension contribution

amount that was required. Dr. Clark further stated that staffing requirements are tied to class arrays,

which are on page 19 in the BOE budget book, and contractual language relative to teacher/student

loads. Dr. Clark stated that the 11 additional paraprofessional positions that are being requested are

divided as follows: 2.8 in kindergarten, 6.2 in special education, and 2.0 for in-house high school suspension. Ms. Leonardi explained the history of ARRA funding, SFSF funding and IDEA funding to

the Board. Ms. Leonardi also explained that some of the ARRA and SFSF funds are being used for

capacity training in the special education areas. Ms/ Leonardi also stated that there is the potential for a

budget deficit of about \$1.1M in the 2011-12 budget since the grants funding those positions will expire

this coming year but the commitments will remain for future years.

First Selectman Flatto suggested that the BOE consider using some underestimated grant funds to fund a

portion of the BOE budget.

Mrs. McWain stated that the 2010-11 grants have not yet been applied for and that process doesn't

actually begin until April of this year. Mrs. McWain explained that the BOE always uses an assumption

that the Town will receive grants but the actual amounts are never set until long after the budget has

been voted in the spring.

A discussion on the cost of new buses and the actual requirements that the Town needs to follow to meet

State requirements resulted in Chairman Flynn requesting that Mrs. McWain provide the BOF with

some detail on how the estimates in the budget were developed as well as a report detailing the requirements from the State regarding the need to provide buses for all students in the district.

Chairman Flynn thanked Dr. Clark for her service to the Town and congratulated her on her upcoming retirement in June.

Ms. Leonardi, in response to questions from the BOF on State and Federal grants, reported that the funds for grants at both levels are estimates until about December or January of the following year when the State and Federal governments make their determinations of how much will be provided to the cities and towns. Ms. Leonardi stated that she purposely underestimates the tuition to other schools and special education budget lines, especially in these difficult economic times, since funding is expected to be reduced somewhat. Ms. Leonardi distributed a handout detailing the history of the ARRA, SFSF, ECS, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grants and reviewed it with the BOF. Chairman Flynn asked Ms. Leonardi to prepare a report of the last 4 year history of what was received in the Education Cost Sharing(ECS) Grant, what the Town put in, what was estimated and how the money was spent.

After a lengthy discussion, the BOE reported that the total number of FTE positions budgeted for 2010-11 is 1,441.65. Dr. Clark reported that 6.4 teaching positions have been funded for the prior two years with \$51K from SFSF funds. After some further discussion, the Board noted that the fluctuation in grant amounts to be received affects both the Contingency Account and the Undesignated Fund Balance Account in the Town budget insofar as the actual amounts are not determined until long after the budget is voted.

The following lines were reviewed with the BOF as follows:

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Line 301 – Dr. Rosato explained that page 31 contains the details for this item.

Line 303 – Ms. Leonardi explained that page 31 contains the details for this item.

Line 311 – Mrs. McWain explained that page 32 contains the details for this item. Mrs. McWain noted

that usage is down but cost is up for this item.

Line 313 – Mr. Cullen explained that this item covers leases for the maintenance department at Meadow

Street, the alternate high school, grounds contracted services, etc.

Ms. Steeneck asked the BOE if they have ever looked into putting the physical building maintenance, not including the custodial portion of that maintenance, under Town auspices. Mrs. Brand reported that, under State Statute, the BOE has full responsibility for all school properties. Line 407 – Mr. Cullen noted that going green is expensive and there will be another increase next year since the BOE is required to be green by July 2011. Line 503 – Mrs. Nash explained that page 251 contains the details for this item and the details for line 8205 are found on page 297 of the budget book. In response to questions from the Board concerning how the BOE plans for the maintenance/replacement of new technology, Mrs. Nash stated that the technology department has a 5 year plan to address new technology needs and replacement costs and their potential impact on the operating budget. Mrs. Nash further stated that prices for budgeting purposes in this area are based on State contract purchasing pricing. Mrs. Nash also reported that she works closely with the IT people in the Town in an effort to obtain the best possible pricing for replacing and purchasing new hardware and software as needed. Mrs. Nash explained that sometimes going out for bid works to the BOE advantage but sometimes a better price can be obtained through State contract purchasing prices.

Public Comment

James Walsh - RTM Moderator

On page 31, line 3400, why is Medicare going down while hiring 26 positions?
Chairman Flynn informed Mr. Walsh that questions are not allowed during public comment so this question will not be answered at this time.

Cathy Napolitano - St. Thomas School parent

Please continue to fund transportation as a whole because cuts affect private schools, too.

Krista McCarthy Vahey – RTM District 6

The spirit of the March 20th session is to promote public comment so please allow public comment at the March 18th session.

1030 Health and Welfare Andrea Leonardi presented this item to the Board

Ms. Leonardi noted that this item is covered in the Town budget on page 134 of the Town Budget Book.

Ms. Leonardi reported that this item covers required evaluations for students attending private schools in Fairfield.

A discussion about allowing public comment at the March 18th budget session followed and it was

decided to allow public comment at that session at the beginning of the meeting. The First Selectman

will also present his comments on the budget at that session.

Mr. Hiller distributed a schedule of health insurance calculations that had been requested by the Board at a previous meeting.

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