

Milford Board of Education

Minutes for the Budget Workshop: January 15, 2009

Board members present:

Tracy Casey
David Hourigan, Chair
James Quish
Joanne Rohrig
James Santa Barbara
Pam Staneski
Greta Stanford
David Steinlauf

Board members absent:

David Amendola
Cindy Kopazna

Administrators present:

Harvey Polansky, Superintendent
Michael Cummings, Asst. Superintendent
Philip Russell, Deputy Superintendent
Susan Kelleher, Dir. of Pupil Personnel Services

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Milford Board of Education held a budget workshop on Thursday, January 15, 2009 in the Board of Education Meeting Room in the Parsons Complex. Board chair David Hourigan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance immediately following.

II. PROPOSED BUDGET DISCUSSION

Mr. Hourigan told the board the budget discussion would begin with the transportation account, account series 5000.

Mrs. Staneski asked about the budget increase for the vocational agricultural program. She was told that a second bus will be needed to transport the students next year.

Mrs. Rohrig asked how many students are currently enrolled in the vocational agricultural program and the reason for the added bus.

Mr. Russell reported 19 students are currently enrolled. The students are picked up at various locations and taken to Trumbull. The time is exceeding 1 hour for transport.

Dr. Polansky told the board there could be satellite locations for pick up/drop off that could save the cost of another bus. It is not a requirement of the state to pick up at various locations.

Mr. Santa Barbara asked what the need and purpose for of late buses.

Mr. Cummings told him late buses at the middle school level enables the students to participate in extra-curricular activities while the late buses at the high schools allow those students to participate in academic related activities. Late buses have been in place since 1995 in the middle schools and in the high schools for two years.

Mrs. Staneski asked if the board was notified of the added bus for transportation and was told no. Then where did the money come from?

Mr. Russell told her the bus routes are reviewed every year and rearranged upon the need.

Mr. Quish asked when the contract for transportation ends. Durham Bus Services ends in 2010. There is a clause in the contract that benefits us to continue with Durham at least one year beyond its expiration because the buses are then purchased.

Dr. Polansky also stated the cost per mile was extremely low. Mr. Russell reported we have negotiated a rate that is the 2nd lowest in the state.

Mr. Russell explained the special education bus company goes out to bid every July.

Mrs. Casey asked for clarification of the aides/van driver. Mrs. Kelleher told her the van drivers are paraprofessionals.

Mrs. Staneski asked if the field trips are paid for by the board. Mr. Cummings said the field trips are for the scheduled field trips that are tied into curricular activities.

Mr. Hourigan asked if the paraprofessionals that drive the vans teach in the class. Mrs. Kelleher explained one para only drives a van and the other performs 1 hour in the classroom. The van drivers are staggered.

Mr. Hourigan for the paraprofessional salary. Dr. Polansky passed out a handout which included salaries.

Mr. Hourigan made a correction to the comment of Tuesday night relative to the hourly rate for writing aides. Mr. Cummings stated the writing aides at Foran were receiving \$9.50 in fact their salary is \$30.00.

In response to the questions of paraprofessional salary, one makes \$17,000 and the other makes \$23,000. They are both paid as paraprofessionals.

Mrs. Staneski asked for clarification of the paraprofessionals salaries and where they fall within the budget.

Mr. Russell explained that \$42,000 is for the two paraprofessionals and the remainder is for the monitors.

Mr. Hourigan asked Mrs. Kelleher to provide the number of aides that ride the bus.

Administration continued to clarify budget related questions asked by board members.

Mrs. Casey questioned the difference in the postage forecasts. She recommended to have the schools assist each other in trying to lower their costs.

Mr. Cummings explained that some schools have taken on the “going green” program and he hopes the other schools will follow.

Mrs. Casey asked about ConnectEd.

Dr. Polansky explained the district is given a certain amount of minutes to use every year. The district has never gone over that allocation. The schools are given a certain amount of minutes to use annually.

During the review of the 5600 account series, Dr. Polansky told the board that we do not plan to receive the grant for the vocational agricultural program.

Mrs. Staneski said the law that just went to effect requires that we allow students to attend the program.

Dr. Polansky told her it is based on a three year average, which is 20. Mr. Russell told the board the number 20 came from current students in the program.

Mrs. Rohrig asked if the state puts on a cap of what we pay per student to go to Vo-Ag. Dr. Polansky told her no.

Mrs. Staneski asked why legislature would not cap the program. The vo-ag program is a full day program unlike the ECA program.

Mrs. Staneski asked for the cost of sports physicals for 7-12. She was told \$12,000 is budgeted for the sports physicals. However the state does not require the district to provide the physicals. The board then discussed the pros and cons of continuing this benefit.

Mrs. Staneski said the students are required to have physicals before they enter certain grades. Therefore, this could be eliminated.

She also would like the middle school graduation to be eliminated. They could celebrate with a picnic.

Mrs. Rohrig questioned why middle schools be included if we don't have middle school sports.

Mrs. Stanford questioned the dollar amount for graduation at West Shore.

Mrs. Casey asked if providing physicals by the district was common and was told yes.

Mr. Russell told her that by offering the physicals, we can better track and ensure a physical is done.

Mr. Steinlauf asked how long the district has offered physicals to students. He was told since at least the 70s. The state does not require the school district to provide it to the student.

Mrs. Staneski said we could charge a fee for the physical.

Mr. Hourigan said that anyone who signs up for a sports program is entitled to a physical.

Mr. Quish questioned the series 6400, periodicals and library books. He referred to other alternatives such as the internet. He recommended administration reach out to universities cleaning house for their unwanted library books.

Dr. Polansky said he would prefer to see the students actually reading a book. There is too much accessibility with the use of a computer.

Mr. Cummings explained the process that is currently in place to replace textbooks.

Mr. Santa Barbara asked for clarification on testing. He believes the children are over tested. Mr. Cummings explained the testing cost includes blue ribbon (a test engine for math that can be used with all grades), data management and Dibbles.

There was board discussion regarding testing for the district.

Mrs. Staneski has seen programs purchased over the last eight years. However, the proficiency rate has not increased from 88%. She asked if the district is over testing. She thinks some testing could be eliminated.

Mr. Cummings agrees with the 88% of the tested kids, the teacher knows what to do. It is the other 12% that as a district we need to work on. A strong curriculum coupled with the appropriate program will help those kids.

Mrs. Stanford agrees with Mrs. Staneski's comment about over testing kids.

In the end, the board requested a copy of the district assessment calendar that includes costs.

Mrs. Stanford made a motion for a recess at 8:45 p.m. Mrs. Rohrig seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

The board reconvened at 8:55 p.m.

Board members questioned the need for smart boards, a truck and extra-curricular stipends. With the current economic times, these seem to be bonus items that could wait.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Hourigan asked for Public Comment.

C. Berni – 96 Centennial Drive – Mrs. Berni supports smart boards in the classrooms with a trained teacher giving the training. She confirmed that Mathewson needs a laminator. The current one is broken.

S. Glennon – 99 Carlson Drive - She is appalled that the district is providing door to door pick up for the Vo-Ag students. She would like to see the district ask parents to pay for the physicals. She also said she is amazed with the technology of the smart boards. Regarding programs, if we are spending the money, we should mandate that it be used.

R. Vitali – Founders Way – He is the board of aldermen liaison to the board of education. He requested administration provide him a break out of the transportation cost of special ed/regular and preschool. He then requested that administration break out the operational costs at each high school.

M. Taylor – 340 Wolf Harbor Road – Echoed Ms. Glennon’s comments.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Hourigan asked for a motion to adjourn.

Mrs. Stanford made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Rohrig seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Greta Stanford
Corresponding Secretary

Pam Griffin
Recording Secretary