

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS SESSION
BOARD OF EDUCATION PRESENTATION
APRIL 29, 2015**

The Board of Aldermen held a budget deliberation session on Thursday, April 29, 2015 in the aldermanic chambers of City Hall. Chairman Vetro welcomed everyone to the meeting of the proposed budget to hear from one final city department, Public Library and from the Board of Education their proposed budget for fiscal year 2015-2016. He asked those present to join in saluting our flag and reciting the Pledge of allegiance.

1. Roll Call

Board Members Present

B. Anderson (8:52 p.m.)
M. Casey
S. Fontana
D. German
M. Hardiman
D. Kubek
S. Shaw
F. Smith
G. Stanford
N. Veccharelli
P. Vetro
R. Vitali

Also Present

Mayor Benjamin G. Blake
P. Erodicti, Finance Director
S. Fournier, Mayor's Admin Asst
J. Rohrig, City Clerk

Excused

B. Bier
A. Giannattasio
J. Golden

Chairman Vetro reconvened the budget deliberation in Public Session at 7:04 p.m.

4193 Library - Christine Angeli was present for questions/comments. She thanked the Board for the opportunity to come before them. She stated she has come in with a flat budget. Reading from a prepared statement, Ms. Angeli spoke of the number of people coming through the library doors, which are up over the past year. She also spoke of the initiatives of the staff, i.e. a community read, the various programs offered at the library. She stated they have been actively soliciting outside funding. She stated she has received many comments that libraries should just be about books, however she stated their goal and mission has always been to provide information and resources to the community. She commented libraries bring people into the community. She welcomed the Board members to stop by for a visit.

Ald. Smith stated he has the privilege of being the aldermanic liaison to the library. He stated it is a very engaged library, creative and thoughtful. He spoke of the leaps and bounds the library has taken since Ms. Angeli took over. He also spoke of the partnerships they have formed with various agencies and other departments. He spoke highly of the programming the staff has put together. He also commended the children's department. He also recognized the Friends of the Library program, the financial support they provide as well as additional programs.

Ms. Angeli echoed the comments of Ald. Smith regarding the Friends of the Library.

Chairman Vetro thanked Ms. Angeli.

Ald. Kubek asked about a teen area in the library.

Ms. Angeli stated they are looking into additional programs the the teenage group.

Ald. Kubek asked if there would be a dedicated area.

Ms. Angeli stated there are looking to reorganize areas and have a specific area for teens.

Ald. Stanford thanked Angeli for bringing the library into the 21st century.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about fines, passport office and Saturday hours.

Ms. Angeli stated a few years ago the fines were brought back to the library instead of the general fund. She stated the passport office has had a slow done in recent years, but it is self-sufficient. As to Saturday hours, they are open on Saturdays, but close on some weekends. She stated they are closed on Friday mornings.

4996 Education Operations - Dr. Elizabeth Feser, Superintendent, Michael Cummings, Assistant Superintendent, James Richetelli, Assistant Superintendent, Susan Kelleher, Pupil Personnel Director and Susan Glennon, Chairman of the Board of Education were present for questions/comments.

Chairwoman Glennon provided an opening statement. She stated the Board of Education has voted to return to K-5. Reading from a prepared statement she spoke of the revisions of curriculum, common assessments. She also spoke about new courses to the high school program, as well as AP classes, with more and more students taking AP classes, many taking more than one. She continued reading from a prepared statement. Ms. Glennon also spoke of the top list of colleges and universities our children are attending. Over the past several months the Board has enjoyed presentations by our students. She stated the goal is to utilize technology to strengthen programs. Ms. Glennon stated the budgets the Board of Aldermen has supported over the last few years have helped the district to support those needs. She expressed her hope the aldermen would recognize a budget that truly accomplishes these goals.

Dr. Feser provided the Board with a review of the handout regarding the proposed budget with a summary of major budget requests. She spoke of economy of scale which drives the need for the additional teachers they are requesting which impacts the elementary reconfiguration. She spoke about teacher leaders. She stated four of the schools already have teacher leaders and she would like to have four additional teacher leaders of each of the other four schools. She spoke of the changing role of the principal, i.e the requirement to conduct teacher evaluations. Dr. Feser continued with a review of the handout. She stated returning to the K-5 configuration is what the parents wanted. She stated to date, everything is going smoothly. Every parent has received notification and also those parents whose children may be eligible to be grandfathered. She stated they are continuing to work with those parents whose students attend the Boys & Girls Club regarding transportation. Dr. Feser stated the reconfiguration is much more complex than the reconfiguration that took place 6 years ago. She returned to the handout for further explanation. She spoke of the State mandates regarding security, i.e. safety committee that must provide minutes to Mr. Richetelli, fire drills which are more detailed than before, reporting to the State which is required. She stated the role of the security coordinator is very much needed. Dr. Feser also spoke to the requests for an additional custodian at East Shore Middle School, which recently

underwent a major renovation and addition which resulted in an additional 21 sq. ft. She stated regarding the special education van and driver, they currently own 3 vans and are looking for a fourth to help transport students. Referring to the handout Dr. Feser addressed the savings and reductions in the budget (p. 2).

Ald. Fontana asked about the teacher leader positions, which schools have them, the requirements for a teacher leader and you if this is a managerial position.

Dr. Feser stated they have to be a teacher, but they would like them to hold an administrative certificate. She spoke of the responsibilities of the teacher leader, including discipline, assemblies, grade level teach, professional development.

Mr. Cummings stated where the teacher leaders exist they will sit in on PPD; work with the student assistant teams. He stated Pumpkin Delight, Kennedy, Meadowside, Mathewson currently have teacher leaders.

Ald. Fontana asked about any measured success with the programs and teacher leaders.

Mr. Cummings stated they have just begun the second year so they don't have any measures at this point. He referenced DRA scores and stated it would be impossible to single out one factor would be near impossible.

Ald. Fontana asked if the teacher leaders would be doing teacher evaluations.

Mr. Cummings stated it is not the role they want the teacher leader to play and further it would not be allowed in the contract.

Dr. Feser interjected regarding the requirements of the mandates of teacher evaluations. She stated the teacher leader will help the principal carry out his/her role and strengthen work in the classroom and increase student performance.

Ald. Stanford asked how teacher leaders are selected.

Mr. Cummings stated the position would be posted and they would go through an interview process.

Ald. Stanford asked the needed educational requirements.

Mr. Cummings stated for certification purposes they would need a K-6 certification.

Ald. Vitali thanked Dr. Feser and staff for the presentation and for recognizing the need to return to the K-5. He also spoke to the need for teacher leaders. He asked if it is a set position that MEA and MASA is in agreement that this is not really an assistant principal position (perception)

Dr. Feser stated they are aware of the perception, knew the State has approved the need for teacher leaders. She stated to her knowledge, the position is accepted by both unions.

Ald. Vitali (p. 12 - Series) asked about NCLB and the takeover of Common Core. He stated Common Core has driven the budget in light of the mandate of evaluations. He asked about Milford's evaluation vehicle and if it is equal or greater than the State.

Mr. Cummings stated NCLB is still the lay of the land. He spoke of the re-authorization which legislation is just getting to. NCLB mandates testing, AYP approach; most prominent vestige is the remaining CAPT which is still done. Teacher evaluation is a State requirement which was put in several years ago and is separate from NCLB. He stated one is a state law and one is a federal law. He stated Milford's teacher plan goes beyond that of what is required.

Ald. Vitali asked about a cost piece to the unfunded mandates with the increased amount of evaluation so that the district has to hire more personnel.

Mr. Cummings stated they have not hired personnel to do evaluations. He stated they also have teacher evaluation which is an added expense. Under the old plan it was only 15 hours over 5 years.

Ald. Vitali stated so he wished to be clear no additional staff had been hired.

Mr. Cummings stated that was correct that no additional staffing has been hired.

Ald. Vitali commented he felt the district went in too quickly and additional money. He spoke to a more gradual approach.

Mr. Cummings stated if they had wanted they likely would have ended up with a compliance document.

Ald. Vitali asked if the teacher leaders were no longer needed, would they be split among the schools.

Mr. Cummings provided an example of a recent issue at a school. He stated the needs of kids, change in society have prompted these changes.

Ald. German asked about enrollment and a 10 year projection.

Dr. Feser referred to p. XIV which showed projections through 2015; however they did not have projections to 10 years.

Ald. German asked for a 5 year projection.

Dr. Feser stated she would provide that.

Ald. German asked about the after school program.

Dr. Feser stated there was a district after school program at Simon Lake. When those kids were redistricted parents wanted to keep this program and moved the program into Pumpkin and JFK. He stated that program has continued for the last 5 years and that Durham has donated a bus for transporting those students. She stated those kids that were redistricted out of Pumpkin and JFK same request was made. She deferred to Richetelli for additional information.

Mr. Richetelli explained those kids now attend Boys & Girls Club and will receive transportation along with their siblings. He also explained those kids that elect to attend the YMCA would do so at the cost of what the district pays.

Ald. Shaw commented this is a remarkable and responsible budget and the awareness of the challenges with redistricting, SRO's. She expressed gratitude for the work done.

Ald. Casey thanked Dr. Feser for the presentation. He asked if she could expand upon the role of the Academic Support Specialists.

Mr. Cummings stated they recognize the need to support those struggling high school students. He stated they have allocated one staff to the schools. He stated they want to have both a language arts and math specialist.

Ald. Casey asked about the savings in transportation.

Mr. Richetelli stated this is the one area where economy of scale which has been spoken about happens in reverse. He spoke of the amount of transportation with the sister schools which will change when they go back to K-5 and also and increase in walkers. He stated they will be able to decrease the number of runs or the equivalent of three buses. He stated when they reconfigured the district 5 years ago they had to increase buses.

Ald. Smith asked how the staff reductions would be implemented, i.e. attrition, layoffs, changes to different grade levels.

Dr. Feser stated they are constantly monitoring class sizes. She stated enrollment continues to decline and the middle school is starting to decline as well as the high school. She stated they determine the number of positions because they can see how many 6 or 9 graders they will have. Over the last few years, with the elimination of positions, they have not had any layoffs because people have retired or moved to another district.

Ald. Smith thanked Dr. Feser and her staff.

Ald. Vitali asked about the Smooth Jazz concerts and how much money has been generated and the savings in the budget.

Mr. Cummings stated he wanted to thank Jay Rowe for his work. He stated he would have to get back to the aldermen with specific numbers. He explained how they pooled the money and how they were able to purchase the "smart music" program.

Ald. Vitali asked about the purchase of the additional vans and if they spoke with Durham to obtain costs, which may be more cost effective instead of hiring additional staff, benefits, etc.

Mr. Richetelli stated they have explored this with Durham; however the students that are being transported have specific needs. He explained when a student is out placed it is more cost effective over time to have a van and hire a driver at lower cost. He spoke of cooperative purchasing.

Ald. Stanford asked about out placed students and where they are placed.

Ms. Kelleher stated the furthest is Hartford otherwise 20 to 30 minutes.

Ald. German asked the savings having synergistic and the position of the energy person and if will be kept on when the contract ends.

Mr. Richetelli stated the overall savings has been over \$1,000,000. He stated he would provide the aldermen with the numbers. He stated the meat of the program is behavioral and education. He explained one of the requirements that were built into the program was that they would keep the specialist employed. He stated having the energy specialist keeps the district from slipping back and that they continue to have energy savings.

Dr. Feser cited as an example, April vacation. She stated during that week they had 100% efficiency, which means all 14 schools were efficient. She stated that is part of the reporting they receive from synergistic. She stated when the contract ends they will continue to use their software and continue to have these reports.

Ald. German asked if it would be possible to have the position go full-time. He asked about ESMS which is always lit up.

Mr. Richetelli stated they do not compromise on safety and security.

Ald. Veccharelli stated the finance board cut the BOE budget \$100,000.

Dr. Feser stated the BOF eliminated the two requested SRO's.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about the security coordinator position. He asked if currently they are short one SRO.

Mr. Richetelli stated they are not short. He stated there are 4 in total, 2 at each of the high schools and the other 2 split time at the middle schools and the academy.

Ald. Veccharelli asked if the security coordinator could serve as an SRO.

Richetelli stated current SRO's are sworn police officers. The position they are looking to fill will have a pre-requisite with a background in police background.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about having the security coordinator be an SRO and promote a current SRO to this position.

Mr. Richetelli spoke of the requirements of an SRO. He also spoke of PA 13-3 which was put in place after Sandy Hook.

Ald. Veccharelli commended the Board for their work putting the schools back to a K-5 system and how they were able to crunch the numbers. He asked what the total contractual wage cost.

Mr. Richetelli stated total salaries are up this year approximately \$800,000.

Ald. Veccharelli thanked Dr. Feser and staff for coming in with a lean budget and putting the system back to what the public wants.

Ald. German commented about school operations budget which does not include school contribution, public debt, and school nurses. He stated the budget is really over \$120,000,000 and not \$91,000,000. He asked about keeping costs down.

Mr. Richetelli stated they have had discussions with the human resources director and joining her with her efforts. He stated through contract negotiations they have been successful in increasing the premium cost contribution. He stated there have been 2 gains in the bargaining, higher co-pays and high deductible plan. He stated they have recently settled with another bargaining unit with this structure. He also stated new hires will have this plan as well. He stated HSA is the future time and over time will see a cost savings.

Ald. German asked if a lot of employees were taking advantage of the new option.

Mr. Richetelli explained it has been slow.

Ald. Vitali asked about the redistricting and the other considerations.

Dr. Feser explained with regard to programming they have not defined it.

Ald. Vitali asked if that was included with redistricting.

Dr. Feser stated that was part of what parents wanted. She also spoke about compartmentalization which would have to do with how many classrooms they would need.

Ms. Glennon spoke about program rooms and their need. She stated it dictated needs for the number of classrooms.

Ald. Vitali commented regarding the summary of major budget requests. He stated the savings is an abstract concept. He also expressed his disappointment with the amount of money spent in consulting fees spent and the district is back to where they were 5 years ago. He stated would have liked to have seen more options.

Chairman Vetro stated he would contact leadership and department heads as to when the next budget deliberations session would take place.

Mayor Blake stated there are five (5) dates reserved and that he would work with the Chairman Vetro. He stated he has also been speaking with the State and will be speaking with the actuaries and then a date would be agreed upon for adoption.

Ald. Veccharelli and Ald. Anderson made and seconded a motion to recess at 9:24 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen A. Kennedy
Recording Secretary