

# **Milford Board of Education**

## **Board of Education Budget Workshop**

### **January 24, 2011**

#### **Board members present:**

Dave Amendola  
Tracy Casey  
Suzanne DiBiase  
Jack O'Connell  
Gregory Oliver  
Mark Stapleton, Chair  
Jay Tranquilli  
Robert M. White

#### **Board members absent:**

Diane Kruger-Carroll  
Josip Jukic

#### **Administration present:**

Michael Cummings  
Philip Russell  
Wendy Kopazna

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

The Milford Board of Education held a Committee of the Whole Meeting on Monday, January 24, 2011, in the Board of Education Room at the Parsons Complex. Chairman Stapleton called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance immediately following.

### **II. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Cathy Berni – 96 Centennial Drive – Mrs. Berni thanked the board members present. She also said that she wished more people paid attention to the budget by attending meetings and reviewing the budget. While she realizes times are very difficult, the board should support administration and approve the budget as presented. The administration has done their job putting together the budget.

### **III. ADMINISTRATION'S RECOMMENDATION OF THE 2011-12 OPERATION BUDGET:**

Mr. Cummings asked the board members if they had any follow up questions. The board had submitted many questions regarding the budget. (See the attached.)

Mrs. Casey asked for clarification on questions she submitted to administration before the last workshop. She apologized for not being at the workshop held when the questions were reviewed. However, the workshop had been added due to cancellations of scheduled workshops and her she had a previously scheduled commitment.

After all questions were answered, Mr. Cummings told the board the budget outlines the system requirements for 2011- 2012. However, it is greatly impacted by the ARRA stimulus package of 2009, the state legislature's decision to supplant ECS funds with the stimulus funds, the historical reorganization of the school system last spring, and finally the projected loss of over \$4 million in stimulus funding including \$1.9 million that directly impacts staffing.

The total budget request is comprised of the need to replace the loss of those funds, the contractual obligations the district has to its employees, and some modest requests for program improvements.

He also told the board the request would have been substantially higher if it were not for the closure of Simon Lake Elementary School, the reorganization of the remaining 8 schools and the ongoing measures administration has put in place to control long term costs in the district.

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He further said that reductions have been made to administrators, teachers, and other support staff. Administration has reduced purchases of equipment, computers, services, and textbooks. He continued, by expressing that the district cannot reduce these costs further without severely damaging the infrastructure of our school system.

Mr. Cummings read the following prepared statement:

“This year the school system does not have a dramatic answer that will address both economic and educational need. I cannot meet both the needs of those who understandably are concerned about higher taxes and those that are expecting educational improvement. I believe the budget increase we respectfully seek this evening is fair and fiscally responsible but above all is what our kids need.

I will say, repeatedly tonight and over the next few months, that there is no way to cut this budget in any way without hurting student programs. Small cuts will undermine the attempts we are making to improve our middle and high schools. Large cuts will directly impact class sizes.

Every city in the state is experiencing the loss of the stimulus funds and the negative impact it will have on education budgets. There are a number of statewide groups addressing this with the state legislature and the governor and it is possible that funds could be restored to ECS and our budget increase request will drop. But those decisions are beyond our control and I can only present a budget that is mindful of the current reality.

I am certain that after the sacrifices made last year any request for an increase may seem surprising. It should not. At every opportunity last year we said that last year was only one bad economic year in a sequence of bad economic years. Last year we spoke of the funding cliff we would face this year if the ECS formula was not resolved. However unpleasant, these increases should not come as a surprise. The educators of the Milford Public Schools developed a budget with an increase of 1.5%. To further reduce this request or to absorb the other 2.4% increase necessitated by the loss of the ECS funds would fundamentally damage this school system. For me, as Superintendent of Schools to advocate such a position would be unethical. My budget request is a balance of what this school system truly needs to meet the learning needs of all students and recognition of our economic reality.”

Chairman Stapleton called for a recess at 7:50 p.m.

Chairman Stapleton called the meeting back in session at 8:10 p.m.

## IV. ACTION ITEMS

Mr. White made a motion to approve administration’s recommendation of the 2011-2012 Proposed Education Operations Budget in the amount of \$86,476,070 and direct the administration to submit the budget to the Mayor, Board of Finance and Board of Aldermen. Mr. Amendola seconded. By a roll call vote 4-4, the motion failed.

Mrs. Casey made a motion to approve the 2011-12 Education Operations Budget with the board adjustment of a reduction of \$50,000, authorization amount of \$86, 426,070 and direct the administration to submit the budget to the Mayor, Board of Finance and the Board of Aldermen. Mr. White seconded. By a roll call vote 5-3 (DiBiase/O’Connell/Tranquilli/the motion passed).

## V. ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Amendola made a motion to adjourn. Mr. White seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

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Robert M. White

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Corresponding Secretary

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Pam Griffin

Recording Secretary