

**BOARD OF FINANCE
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS - FY 2012/2013
PRESENTATION OF BOARD OF EDUCATION'S PROPOSED BUDGET
FEBRUARY 15, 2012**

The Milford Board of Finance held a budget deliberations session on Wednesday, February 15, 2012 in Conference Room B of the Parsons Complex. Chairman Lema called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. announcing they were out of recess. He stated they were here tonight regarding the education operating budget.

Board Members Present

Brian A Lema, Chairman
Joseph M. Agro, Jr.
Joseph J. Fitzpatrick, Jr.
Scott Marlow
Mickel Montano (6:46 p.m.)

Also Present

Dr. Elizabeth Feser, Supt. of Schools
R. Michael Cummings, Asst. Supt. of Schools
James Richetelli, Deputy Supt. of Operations
Susan Kelleher, Director Pupil Personnel
Tracy Casey, Chairman (BOE)
Mayor Benjamin G. Blake
Peter Erodicti, Finance Director

Chairman Lema noted the full Board was present except Ms. Montano who he noted was at another engagement for Boys & Girls Club, but would be here shortly. He acknowledged the Chairman of the Board of Education, Tracy Casey and asked if she along with the members of administration would join them at the table for conversation and questions/answers regarding the budget.

Mrs. Casey thanked the Board for the opportunity to come before them and recognized the critical role of the Board of Finance regarding finances. She stated as part of the budget process, the Board looked at long range goals. She also spoke of the monies lost from the Federal Government this year, which totaled \$555,000. She stated those monies paid for 12 teaching positions, which she stated is ½% of the current budget. She stated the teachers took a zero step increase which also helped keep increases down. Mrs. Casey went on to speak about the projected declining enrollment next year, which lead to the elimination of five positions in the elementary school, mostly through attrition. She spoke of the district's energy efficiency focus, previously led by Mr. Russell and now led by Mr. Richitelli, who she commented has some new creative ideas. Mrs. Casey stated the Board of Education's budget is very fiscally responsible. She pointed to a \$200,000 cut in the transportation budget, but stressed service would not be impacted. She stated this year's budget is a 1.66% increase.

Mr. Marlow asked the anticipated step increase for next year.

Mrs. Casey stated the budget does provide a long range plan. She also thanked the Board for their approval of the \$12,000,000 bonding which supports the needs at East Shore Middle School. She also noted things are likely to change in the next 3-5 years.

Mr. Marlow asked if the long range study plan is a one-time study or if it would be done over several years.

Mrs. Casey stated they are looking at organizations that have had success with other districts. She stated it is a community group that will have support from the Board of Education.

Mr. Cummings stated there would be a step increase as well as a percentage increase, but they did not know the numbers at this time.

Mrs. Casey spoke regarding the energy savings that have been generated.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the \$200,000 cut to the transportation budget.

Mrs. Casey stated they will be looking at how the bus drops are set up. She cited as an example the buses that go to the agriculture school.

Mr. Richetelli added the Board of Education has challenged administration to look for savings. He stated they will be looking at all routes and all stops at each school.

Mrs. Casey stated they would also look at the ability to opt out.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how they bid.

Mr. Richetelli explained the bus company gives a per bus, per day price. He stated some buses have three or four runs per day. He stated they will work with Durham to obtain the best possible scenarios.

Mr. Marlow asked when the current Durham contract is up.

Mr. Richetelli stated the contract was recently extended two years. He also stated as part of the contract they are looking for a new housing facility so that all of the buses are housed in Milford. He stated the agreement also states they will have a repair facility in Milford.

Mr. Agro officially welcomed Dr. Feser. He spoke of the difficulties this Board has been challenged with over the last 20 years, but that he was sensing a spirit of optimism this year. He stated last year as a Board was particularly difficult. He stated they certainly are not out of the woods, but in a far better place.

Mrs. Casey referred the Board to p. I of the budget book. She went on to explain the long term objectives and goals. She asked the Board to please consider this budget in its entirety. She stated the budget takes into consideration our kids and their needs and the economy and will strengthen and move Milford forward.

Mr. Marlow asked how much of the budget is working toward their goals and if the new positions shown are working toward these goals.

Mrs. Casey stated the focus is on curriculum. She stated the current structure will help attain this.

Mr. Marlow asked the goal to increase by 15% the number of students accepted to 4-year colleges.

Dr. Feser explained the State is beginning to track this, but she stated the percentage is based on how many kids graduate 6 years out. She also stated it only applies to Connecticut colleges.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if there is a dollar figure attached to the budget assumptions.

Mrs. Casey stated there are no dollars become expended because of the realignment. She went on to explain the Director of Student Development position that will oversee the recent bullying legislation. She also spoke of the Safe School Climate which are mandates created without monies attached.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how much time teachers have to spend filling out forms regarding bullying. He stated he has heard that teacher spend more time with this type of paperwork than teaching.

Dr. Feser added that teachers have always been mandated reporters, which she stated has expanded to cafeteria workers and bus drivers.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how many would be funded in the budget.

Dr. Feser responded 1.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the 1% figure for enrollment and what number that represents.

Mr. Cummings replied 5 students.

Mr. Agro commented the word “redeployment” was used. He also stated it was indicated approximately 1,000 less students in the next 10 years. He stated that is a huge percentage of student and would caution if there is that loss of population, hopefully we will see a reduction in the budget. He also asked about the middle school module in place and asked if it is something that fits the current or long range plan.

Dr. Feser replied yes, that she supports the middle school, but stated it could be situated in various ways, i.e. K-8, not that she is advocating for that.

Mrs. Casey stated while they did redeploy some funds to change the structure, they did not redeploy all the funds.

p. 19 (4104) Energy Conservation Services – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked for an explanation of this account.

Mr. Richetelli stated this is the EEI or Energy Education, Inc. He stated the district has implemented an energy service. He went on to explain how they help the district and save costs.

Mr. Fitzpatrick referred back to p. IX and asked if about the increase in total maintenance 6.8%.

Mr. Richetelli explained the district has committed funds to the Foran High School project. He stated the old administration wing is being transferred to art/music space. He stated there will also be much needed repairs at West Shore Middle School.

Mr. Agro asked if the energy contract is really applies to apples.

Mr. Richetelli stated this project was initiated by Mr. Russell who was a skeptic, but after much reservation they have found savings. He explained the benchmark they are using is the 09/10 fiscal year.

Mr. Agro asked if they were confident the benchmarks were correct.

Mr. Richetelli replied yes.

Mr. Marlow asked if there would come a time when the district would no longer need this company's services.

Mr. Richetelli explained the need for constant pressure and making sure of awareness, otherwise you tend to take a step back.

Mr. Agro asked about renewal of the contract and would benchmark would then to used.

Mr. Richetelli stated they were not sure at this time.

p. 1 (Administrators) – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the increase of administration.

Mrs. Casey stated it is due to a change in the curriculum. She explained there already is an administrator and that position is being changed.

Chairman Lema asked where it shows up in each individual school.

Dr. Feser stated all would report to Mr. Cummings.

Mr. Cummings stated it does not reflect the 14 individuals because most are part-time. He stated they will go back to the classroom and explained the current coordinator roles will be back in the classroom.

Chairman Lema asked about the "all schools" line item and if that designation was new.

Mr. Cummings stated it has been there. He stated in the past years the district has supplied the Board with a list.

p. 2 (Teachers – Regular) – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the jump in special education from 1.40 to 5.10.

Ms. Kelleher explained it is due to the reduction of the IDEA funding and explained it is not a real increase.

Mr. Marlow asked if there would be a need for more guidance counselors based on the goals that have been set up.

Mr. Cummings stated they may need to increase guidance support in the middle schools.

p. 4 (Homebound, Summer School, Substitute Teachers, Curriculum Work, Coaches and Advisors) – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the Summer School Program and where the \$126,000 is reflected.

Mr. Cummings stated there are several components to this. He spoke of the addition of the K-5 elementary program, advancing kids readying them for school. He also addressed courses for rising 10-11 grade students who are taking AP classes. He stated there is also a transition class for 8th grade student, high school leadership

academy, i.e. sports, civic organizations and two math transition classes. He stated this is all based on the Common Core Standard.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the legitimacy of these programs and where the research was done.

Mr. Cummings stated a lot has to do with college and career readiness. He explained the need to ready kids for AP classes and make kids more successful. He stated the standard of who is AP ready is no longer acceptable.

Dr. Feser added there is compelling research that if kids take one AP class it increases their chances of graduating from college.

Mr. Agro commented it is a way of broadening the opportunities of engagement for the child and that he liked it.

p. 5 (Secretarial) – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked why central office has 13 secretaries.

Mr. Richetelli stated you have to take into account the offices of the superintendent, assistant superintendent, human resources, accounts payable, payroll, custodial and special education.

Mrs. Casey added there are 11 now.

Mr. Fitzpatrick commented with all the technology today, he questioned the staffing amount.

Dr. Feser stated with the various need for reporting, it is necessary.

p. 8 (Hourly Aides, Media Aides, Cafeteria Aides) – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the media aides.

Mr. Cummings explained the reallocation of media aides, taking one from the high school and putting them in the elementary school.

P. 12 (2000 Series – Benefits) – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the reduction in unemployment.

Mr. Richetelli stated in the past two years they have had a reduction in staff. He stated they don't believe they will have that kind of reduction this year, so they will not be paying much in the way of unemployment benefits.

p. 14 (3000 Series – Contracted Services) – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked why MIS went down so much.

Mr. Cummings responded they reduced the long standing tutorial program for students. He also stated the per

Mr. Marlow asked about line item 3238 Consultation Services, if these monies reflect the long range plan services.

Mrs. Casey responded yes.

p. 18 (4100 – Electricity) – Mr. Agro commented with regard to electricity and heat and stated everyone needed to find ways to be conscious and save energy and find ways to conserve.

p. 25 (5107 – Transportation) – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if they would see a reduction here in lieu of the \$200,000 reduction in transportation.

Mr. Richetelli explained the district's contract with Durham stated they pay the first \$1.00

p. 27 (5600 Series – Tuition) – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about tuition ECA.

Ms. Kelleher replied it is the Educational Center for Arts.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how many attend.

Mr. Cummings replied 31.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the Aquaculture program and how many attend and cost.

Mr. Cummings replied 30 students currently attend. He stated the district pays a flat rate up to 50 students and then a fee thereafter.

Mr. Agro asked about the Vo Ag program.

Mr. Cummings stated there are currently 23 students. He stated they do expect an increase from Trumbull.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if this program is State mandated.

Mr. Cummings explained legislation was introduced and stated the district had to offer both programs, but that they could cap it at 23, which was the number of students attending at the time.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the Gifted Students Program.

Mr. Cummings stated the program was intended to serve high school students who accelerated through math and were taking higher level math classes.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how many students.

Mr. Cummings responded there aren't any this year.

p. 32 (6000 Series) – Mr. Marlow asked about the increase at Pumpkin Delight.

Mr. Cummings explained each principal gets a certain amount based on pupil enrollment, which they are able to use at their discretion. He stated at Pumpkin Delight Mr. Madancy identified the need to strengthen parental support and these funds are dedicated towards that.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the district supplies students with computers.

Ms. Kelleher stated when a student is identified they are supplied with an ipad or equivalent.

p. 43 (8000 Series) – Mr. Marlow asked about dues and fees.

Dr. Feser stated they are joining CABA and explained they are getting an initial rate of one half off.

p. G1 (Entitlement Grants) Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the district has a grant writer.

Dr. Feser replied no.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how they are notified of various grants.

Mr. Cummings explained there is an email alert service. He stated another way is through professional development and word of mouth.

Mr. Marlow asked about the IDEA funding.

Ms. Kelleher stated they were cut \$38,000 midyear, adding it was a federal grant.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if there was any potential increase in ECS monies.

Mr. Richetelli stated it is in the Mayor's proposed budget, but that it has not gone through legislation as yet.

Mr. Marlow thanked the panel for an excellent presentation. He also thanked them for sending along the questions.

Mr. Fitzpatrick echoed the comments of Mr. Marlow, adding it was a great job.

Mr. Agro asked about the population at the Academy and noted it appears to have dropped off.

Mr. Cummings referred to p. XIV. He explained he does not budget for the high school class.

Dr. Feser added these numbers reflect student population as of October 1, but that they have changed dramatically since then. She stated the current enrollment is 90.

Being no further business to discuss, Mr. Agro and Mr. Fitzpatrick made and seconded a motion to recess at 8:06 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen K. Huber
Recording Secretary