

**BOARD OF FINANCE
BUDGET HEARINGS - PROPOSED BUDGET FY2017-2018
FEBRUARY 15, 2017**

The Board of Finance held a budget deliberations session on Wednesday, February 15, 2017, in Conference Room B of the Parsons Complex. Chairman Lema announced the Board was out of recess and reconvened the budget deliberations meeting in public session at 6:33 p.m.

Board Members Present

Brian Lema, Chairman
Joseph J. Fitzpatrick, Jr.
Lauren Secondi

Excused: Joseph Castignoli
Mickel Montano

Also Present

Peter Erodici, Finance Director
Dr. Elizabeth Feser, Supt. of Schools
Jeffrey Burt, Asst. Sup. of Schools
James Richetelli, Chief Operations Officer
Carole Swift, Director Pupil Personnel
Susan Glennon, Chairman (BOE)

Board of Education Chairwoman, Susan Glennon, gave a brief introduction to the Board indicating the Board of Education is requesting a 0.791% increase, less than 1%. She explained the contractual wage increase exceed the requested increase. The Board of Education developed its budget with sensitivity to citizens of Milford and believes the budget meets the needs of the district.

Dr. Elizabeth Feser thanked the Board for the opportunity to review the Board's budget. She stated that in preparing the budget the Board of Education understood it needed to be fiscally responsible. Dr. Feser discussed goals for continue improvement of students, schools, technology and infrastructure. Dr. Feser stated the major requests concerning student pathway learning, following by language labs and chromebooks. This will upgrade the robotics program in the middle schools. Mr. Fitzgerald asked if the student compete in the robotics program. Dr. Feser indicated that there are 3 middle school teams that did compete with some winning awards. Mr. Jeffrey Burt added that all 7th grade students are exposed to the robotic pathway.

Dr. Feser stated that the second pathway is entrepreneurship in business. This pathway came about from hearing from students and teachers. Many students expressed an interest in starting their own business. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked what grade level this pathway would be offered. Dr. Feser stated this would be at the high school level. She further indicated that for students that stay with the program they will finish with a culminating project. The plan is to remodel the old business classes to be more like a business office. Dr. Feser indicated the total requested budget is \$79,300 with no new staffing.

Dr. Feser stated one of the next major requests is due to new science standards. They would like to purchase chromebooks for all students which are approximately \$300 each. The students will be doing a lot of internet work and will be given material linked to the new standards. Mr. Burt stated that Google and other applications allow for collaboration with other student. They are looking to move in this direction to address the new standards. Mr. Burt further indicated that the students will work with Google Classroom, a safe environment where they will be working with their teachers and peers. Dr. Feser indicated that the students can all work together as a group and can see what each

other is doing. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how the teachers are learning such applications. Mr. Burt stated through professional development and other learning opportunities. He further stated there is in-house staff with experience in this area. Google has made this program user friendly. Dr. Feser indicated that the high schools already have chromebooks and that they are using more and more technology. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the chromebooks are purchased or leased. Dr. Feser stated they are purchased.

Dr. Feser discussed the request for equalizing substitute pay. She indicated that substitute in the elementary and middle schools are paid considerably less than those in the high schools. The elementary schools are chronically short on substitutes and teachers are having to double up. They would increase substitutes to \$90/day for all schools which is equivalent to other school districts.

Dr. Feser discussed required tuition payments to Bridgeport magnet schools. The state has authorized Bridgeport to charge tuition for those students who attend magnet schools. Currently, there are 2 Milford students that attend Bridgeport magnet schools. This tuition charge is non-negotiable.

Dr. Feser stated that this year Foran will be visited for its NEASC accreditation. This is a one-time charge.

Dr. Feser indicated that under security and climate there is a request for one additional SRO. She indicated that the Board had requested the SRO, but since it was removed from the budget. They spoke with the Mayor who suggested they put the request in for review. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if 50% is in the BOE budget, but not the police budget how would they make it work. Dr. Feser indicated it could not work.

Dr. Feser discussed the need for a residency/truancy officer. She indicated that more families are attending from out of district. A residency/truancy officer will be responsible for investigating these situations. Mr. Burt stated that in the past the BOE has used private investigative services. This would allow someone in-house to work on these types of cases. He further explained that truancy aspect is to work with students and families who are excessively absent. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how successful the BOE has been on collecting tuition from out of district families. Dr. Feser explained that in most instances once a family receives a letter stating they district status has come in to questions they will withdraw their students. She further explained that payment has been pursued from those instances where it was extremely egregious.

Dr. Feser discussed the increases to employee benefits and its impact on the budget. James Richetelli explained that Blue Cross/Blue Shield has a significant impact. All other employees are budgeted under the City budget where the BOE pays for retirees. The obligations are contractual and there is no control over these costs and premiums. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if this a supplemental plan to Medicare. Mr. Richetelli explained that it is a contractual obligation. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the retirees pay anything towards this coverage. Mr. Richetelli explained that some do pursuant to the contract language. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if this is self-insured. Mr. Richetelli responded that they are self-insured for employees, but not for retirees.

Dr. Feser discussed savings areas within the requested budget. She stated that staff reductions are the biggest area with 10.0 on the regular education side, 4.4 special education and 3.0 paraeducators due to declining enrollment. Education supplies are reduced by \$432,889 primarily due to request for very few textbooks. Utility costs are declining. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated he thought utility costs were going up. Mr. Richetelli explained that solar is being installed at 5 schools and that the BOE will receive ZREC credits from United Illuminating. It is expected that within 3 years all schools will have solar. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the schools will use all the solar energy or will it be leased out. Mr. Richetelli explained the schools will still use United Illuminating and Constellation, but it will be offset by the solar. Dr. Feser stated the savings on transportation is due Vo-Ag only needing one bus and the closing of St. Gabriels school. It had been anticipated that more runs would be necessary due to the closing of St. Gabriels, but that was not the case and therefore transportation has been reduced. Mr. Richetelli indicated that buses had also been overestimated because of the changes in walking distances. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how much of a savings was realized this years. Mr. Richetelli stated while he does not have an exact amount they project a significant savings.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked what is anticipated in the education budget based on the Governor's suggested budget. Susan Glennon stated it is not clear yet what those cuts will be. Mr. Richetelli stated they will work with it and find cuts if it that happens. Ms. Glennon stated the BOE would have to take a very careful look at the budget and determine where to make those cuts. Mr. Fitzpatrick inquired as to the projected drop in enrollment. Ms. Glennon stated approximately 200 student less. Dr. Feser reviewed the numbers for the various schools. She explained that kindergarten is the unknown. Chairman Lema asked if 850 high school students is typical. Dr. Feser explained that it varies and recited numbers from other districts. Chairman Lema asked if there is an ideal number of high school students. Dr. Feser indicated the numbers affect what can be offered. She explained that if enrollment continues to decline not all programs will continue to be offered.

1000 Series – Salaries – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked why the Academy was increased by .1. Dr. Feser explained a ½ teacher and ½ administrator was becoming a fulltime administrator position. Mr. Burt explained that a portion of a grant can be used for administration. There will be added responsibilities to this position which include after school and expelled students. Mr. Fitzpatrick inquired as to how many Academy students. Dr. Feser responded currently 70 student, but you will usually see an increase in January.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked why special education dropped .40. Carole Swift stated she was not certain why the decrease at the Academy, but special education teachers was down a total of 4. Mr. Fitzpatrick inquired if the special education teachers move around from school to school. Mrs. Swift responded they do move around. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked why they would not be under the central office portion. Mr. Richetelli explained central office is administration.

Mr. Lema asked if there was a change to secretarial on page 5. Mr. Richetelli explained that there were no new positions. There had been some reorganization due to retirements and a part time position has been removed. It was determined that a secretary was needed in the benefits office. One position was under clerical that has now been moved to secretarial. Overall there is a reduction of .5 positions.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked for an explanation of homebound. Mrs. Swift explained this if for homebound tutoring for any student who may be expelled, out placement, sick or other similar situations.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked for an explanation of the 1127-overtime. Mr. Richetelli it is for overtime compensation. This is mainly building maintenance and sometimes secretarial. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked why this overtime is not assigned to each job type classification. Mr. Richetelli explained overtime is paid from one account. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated he did not think that was good accounting practice and he would like to see it broken out. Peter Erodici explained on the City side each department has its own overtime account. Mr. Richetelli explained they do have accounting practices that shows where the overtime is going. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated he wants to see it in the budget. He feels each classification should have its own line, he does not like seeing it as a lump sum.

Mr. Lema stated a few years ago there was an increase in media aide positions. He asked how that increase has affected programs. Mr. Burt explained how the media aides interact with the students and work with new technology. Mr. Lema asked if there was a media aide in each school. Dr. Feser responded each school has an aide. Mr. Fitzpatrick inquired as to the hourly aides. Mr. Richetelli explained at the elementary and middle schools the aides are greeters, at the high school they are suspension aides. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked for an explanation for the aides listed at the bottom. Mrs. Swift explained those aides are bus monitors.

2000 Series – Benefits - Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the BOE is self-insured. Mr. Richetelli stated the City is self-insured, the BOE is insured primarily with CIRMA. Mr. Fitzpatrick commented that expenses are going up. Mr. Richetelli explained they are working getting risks under control. Overall the premiums are good. He further stated the BOE had looked at going into the City's self-insured fund, but that would be more of a burden to the City.

3000 Series – Contracted Services – Mr. Lema asked why management information systems had gone down over the past 3 years. Mr. Burt explained they were working on being more efficient in that area. They have a computer software agent at a lower cost and they are continually looking to reduce costs. Mrs. Swift commented that EP direct was based on an old enrollment number that has since dropped so costs are down.

Mr. Fitzpatrick inquired as to the trainers item. Mr. Richetelli indicated that is for contracted services for athletics.

4000 Series – Facilities – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the Foran, Law and Harborside were using heating oil. Mr. Richetelli explained they have the ability to use heating oil, but have not in several years. Mr. Fitzpatrick commented that the East Shore costs are down. Mr. Richetelli stated there is now more space at East Shore, but they have worked hard to get the costs under control.

5000 Series – Transportation, Tuition and Other Support – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the Special Education 5109 and 5011 driver is provided by the bus company. Mr. Richetelli explained Special Education is 5101-5103 and that the district has drivers that they supplement. Mrs. Swift explained that some students go out in the field or the community such as Parsons' Perks at the Parsons Government Cetner. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked for an explanation of 5401, Telecommunications. Mr. Richetelli stated this is for telephones and the like. Due to new technology the costs are going down.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked under athletic insurance if student provide their own. Mr. Richetelli explained it is not required, however, injuries go through parents health insurance first and this is for any uncovered portion. Due to rising deductibles in health insurance they are experiencing more claims. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if travel/mileage is for all schools. Mr. Richetelli explained this is at the IRS mileage rate and it covers costs between schools, seminars and the like.

6000 – Education Supplies – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked why instructional supplies is all school and why doesn't each school have its own. Mr. Richetelli explained each school is give an amount based on enrollment and principals have control over those costs in accounts 6100 and 6110. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked for an explanation of all schools. Mr. Burt explained that supervisors control this budget and that it is district wide not assigned to any one school. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked on account 6150 what is the percentage of student going on to school. Dr. Feser replied 75% to 88% for 2 and 4 year students. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked for the graduation rate. Dr. Feser replied 97%. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if that number includes Academy students. Dr. Feser stated it does, but it may take them 5 to 6 years. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how many Academy students. Mr. Burt there are 75 to 80 students by the end of the year. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the Academy student are provided opportunities such as robotics programs. Mr. Burt stated they are working to expanded opportunities.

7000 – Equipment – Mr. Lema asked why there is an increase to furniture and fixtures. Mr. Burt explained this is due the career pathways at the high schools. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked why leasing computers rather than purchasing. Mr. Burt explained the ideal lifespan is 5 years. When they looked at the overall costs leasing worked to their advantage. Mr. Fitzpatrick noted there is a drastic reduction in computer prices and he has a hard time seeing leasing as advantageous. He understands chrombooks is new. He would like to see the leasing of computers looked at carefully. Mr. Richetelli stated the cost is for that year and believes they are 4 year leases. Mr. Burt explained they have looked very closely at this and leasing work better dollar wise. Mr. Lema asked if they are for desktops or laptops. Mr. Burt stated they are mostly desktops.

8000 – All Other – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if professional development costs will go up because of pathways. Dr. Fester stated it would not increase, they have very good teachers in these areas. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if student activities included band equipment. Mr. Richetelli explained that band equipment would be under equipment, chorus would be uniforms. He also explained other extracurricular activities would be covered under this account. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked what the hockey item covers. Mr. Richetelli explained this if for ice time, uniforms and equipment. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated he thought the students paid their own expenses. Mr. Richetelli stated that most do, but for that can't we pay the costs. He also stated that there is a girls co-op team. Students contribute \$600 each for that team and it is growing in popularity. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if coaches receive a stipend. Mr. Richetelli responded the coaches do receive a stipend.

Grants – Mr. Fitzpatrick asked who grants are obtained, is there a grant writer. Dr. Feser responded there is not a grant writer. The grants at the top of the page are entitlement and lower on the page are competitive grants. Not all grants are guaranteed.

Chairman Lema stated the Board would stand in recess until next Monday, February 13, 2017. The Board recessed at 8:06 p.m.

The Board recessed at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Toni Jo Weeks", is written over a horizontal blue line.

Toni Jo Weeks
Recording Secretary