

**BOARD OF FINANCE
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS
PRESENTATION OF BOARD OF EDUCATION'S PROPOSED BUDGET
MARCH 3, 2010**

The Milford Board of Finance held a budget deliberations session on Wednesday, March 3, 2010 in Conference Room B of the Parsons Complex. Chairman Lema announced the Board was out of recess at 6:32 p.m.

Board Members Present

Brian A Lema, Chairman
Joseph M. Agro, Jr.
Joseph J. Fitzpatrick, Jr.
Paul Beckwith
Scott Marlow

Also Present

R. Michael Cummings, Acting Supt. of Schools
Philip Russell, Deputy Supt. of Operations
Susan Kelleher, Director Pupil Personnel
Dr. Mark Stapleton, Chairman (BOE)

Chairman Lema welcomed the members of the Board of Education. He stated they were welcome to proceed with their presentation or start with questions.

Mr. Russell provided the Board with details concerning the stimulus monies they received. He referred the Board to p. IV of the handout. He stated the total the Board of Education received was about \$1,500,000. Mr. Russell stated after meeting with the mayor they reduced their appropriations. He stated the original budget approved last year was \$82,049,000, but it was reduced the \$1,500,000 to reflect the stimulus money. He stated the decrease was about 30 positions out of the budget. Mr. Russell stated however, that the stimulus money would go away in about 1 ½ years so they would have to find a way to fund those positions in the next budget.

Mr. Marlow asked what positions were affected.

Mr. Russell replied it was all teaching positions.

Chairman Lema asked if the 30 positions existed.

Mr. Russell responded yes. He stated the stimulus money helped them absorb the cuts they received in last year's budget. He stated the difficulty will be when the money is gone.

Mr. Cummings also stated they added math coaches (3.4) and 1.5 reading specialists.

Mr. Russell reiterated those 30 positions are not in the budget, nor are the coach positions and reading specialist. He referred the Board to p. 123 for an explanation.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about ARRA and if that was stimulus money.

Mr. Russell responded yes.

Mr. Beckwith asked how many expected retirements in the next year or two.

Mr. Russell explained it is a number based on statistics and that they generally expect 15-18 to leave per year.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked in general how many unemployed teacher there were in the state.

Mr. Russell explained they really did not have the statistics.

Mr. Cummings stated finding world language and science teachers are the hardest. He also spoke of the numerous elementary education applications.

Mr. Russell also pointed out all union contracts, except the teachers come up this year. He stated the administrators will not receive an increase. He also stated the secretaries are the second union to reach an agreement and they will receive.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the teachers.

Mr. Russell responded they will begin negotiations with the teachers in 2011-2012.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the entitlement grants are state or federal.

Mr. Russell responded three quarters are State passed through federal and then state.

Mr. Marlow asked what class size is based on.

Mr. Cummings responded kindergarten and first grade are 18; second to fifth grade is 22-23 students and fifth grade can go up as 25. He stated in the middle and high schools are usually around 25. He stated at the high school level class size is driven by scheduling. He stated the average is usually 22. Mr. Cummings stated they made a commitment to the Board of Education to run advanced classes for seniors.

Mr. Cummings continued with the budget presentation (handout). He stated they have a plan and are trying to organize and have a strategic plan fit within their framework.

Mr. Russell referred the Board to p. 10 of the handout. He explained the 13.3% increase was submitted and was reduced to the 4.9% as shown.

Mr. Cummings continued with the presentation. He went on to explain the stimulus monies versus ECS monies, which he stated was cut by 14% and noted the savings was to the State and not the local.

Mrs. Kelleher stated the budget is based on experience through the years. She stated this year was somewhat different in that they had three students move into district, plus another two students who required a paraprofessional.

Mr. Beckwith asked if they have tried to get Boys/Girls Village as a host site to help defer costs.

Mrs. Kelleher responded no. She explained if a student is placed at Boys/Girls Village Milford pays the tuition.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how many students they were talking about.

Mrs. Kelleher responded there are three or four at a time.

Mr. Russell noted there are only 5 or 6 other towns where this occurs. He stated they have had joint meetings with legislatures but have not had any success.

Mr. Beckwith asked about the Trumbull Vo Ag program received any State dollars.

Mr. Russell stated Milford pays \$8,000 per student.

Dr. Stapleton interjected stating this program is a State mandate.

Mr. Russell referred the Board to p. 83 of the budget book and explained the \$167,200 in tuition costs and bussing.

Mr. Beckwith asked if the Town of Trumbull gets additional State dollars.

Mr. Russell responded yes. He stated they get approximately \$3,000-4,000 additional. He pointed out there are 17 Vo Ag programs in the State.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the comparison and having one bus versus two.

Mr. Cummings explained it was a safety concern in getting the children to school.

Mr. Kelleher referred the Board to p. 20-21 of the budget book and explained the mandated pre-school program.

Mr. Beckwith referring to p. 6 of the budget book asked if there is one less administrator.

Mr. Cummings explained the assessment coordinator was reduced.

Mr. Marlow referring to p. 8-9 asked about teacher salaries and asked if it is the step classification that makes the difference at each school.

Mr. Russell responded yes. He explained some schools may have a hiring mix of veteran staff.

Chairman Lema asked if it was fair to say the staffing levels are constant.

Mr. Cummings responded yes.

Mr. Beckwith asked about legal fees not covered by retainer.

Mr. Russell stated negotiations, lawsuits and due process hearings are not covered in the retainer.

Mrs. Kelleher also stated if an attorney is required to attend a hearing, that fee is not covered in the retainer.

Mr. Beckwith asked about the behaviorist (p. 12) and if this is a mandated position.

Mr. Cummings explained the district has been searching for a number of years to find someone and that they have been lucky to find someone who is very highly specialized.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about homebound costs which appeared up about \$25,000.

Mr. Cummings explained this account was drastically reduced last year which just was not realistic. He stated this account is for students who receive homebound studies for a variety of reasons.

Mr. Marlow asked about special education – summer session.

Mrs. Kelleher explained it is for those students who need to keep works on their skills to continue to progress.

Mr. Beckwith asked about additional dollars for substitute teachers.

Mr. Russell responded it depends on the substitute pool. He stated there are times when there are long term absences, i.e. injury, pregnancy, etc. He stated it really is a best guess.

Mr. Beckwith referred to p. 24-25 and asked about custodial services. He asked is more manpower would be needed at the two high schools with the additions to the schools.

Mr. Russell responded the 10 individuals assigned to those schools basically will pick up another classroom.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the district had looked at outsourcing.

Mr. Russell responded yes. He stated they had looked at it several years ago and that it really proved to be a union issue.

Mr. Beckwith referred to p. 30-31 and asked about the percentage increase in the individuals in this category.

Mr. Russell stated most individuals received 1% or 2%.

Mr. Beckwith referred to p. 32-33 regarding security guards. He asked if the district could work with the police department and use their off-duty personnel for manpower.

Mr. Russell explained this is an area where they prefer not to have turnovers and explained it was important the person each day was recognizable.

Mr. Agro commented the Board spoke briefly about this last week when the police chief was here.

Mr. Cummings explained the job duties of the officer.

Mr. Beckwith referred to p. 36 – Workers Compensation and asked if there had been a lot of claims.

Mr. Russell stated this year there has been a little bump up, but that the district is lower compared to the city.

Mr. Beckwith asked about education reimbursement and if there is active participation.

Mr. Russell stated the district is getting younger teachers who require obtaining their master's degree, which is required within 5 years.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about Medicare and why such a big jump.

Mr. Russell explained it is the Medicare portion of social security.

Mr. Marlow referred to p. 40 – Teaching Services and asked how many substitutes the district has.

Mr. Russell explained that account pays for 16 interns from local colleges they work with.

Mr. Marlow referred to p. 42-43 – Psychotherapy Services. He asked if the school psychologist could do this as well.

Mrs. Kelleher explained these are the clinical psychologists who come in to provide support in specific cases.

Mr. Beckwith referred to p. 46-47 Architect/Engineering Services.

Mr. Russell cited as an example the parking lot at Harborside School. He stated the architectural fees came out of this account.

Mr. Beckwith asked about negotiations/legal fees.

Mr. Russell stated this was requested because of the outside tuition claims.

Mrs. Kelleher added the district started off the year with four due process claims. Additionally, they expect a labor claim in the spring.

Mr. Beckwith expressed concern this number would increase because of the issue with the superintendent.

Mr. Marlow referred to p. 46 and asked if the district is currently in the fourth year of the lease payment on the financial information system.

Mr. Russell stated it would be gone after this year.

Mr. Marlow referred to p. 50-51 and asked where the district stands with regard to energy management systems.

Mr. Russell stated they are in talks with Johnson Controls. He stated they are talking with them for some enhancement to the current system. He also noted everything is controlled through a laptop and that they pay as they go. He also pointed out the heat energy costs went way up and that they expect to be over. He explained the three buildings that were recently converted so they will have a deficit in one area and a surplus in another which should offset each other. Mr. Russell stated they are constantly looking at these costs and ways for savings.

Mr. Fitzpatrick referred to p. 54-55 and asked if this is bid every year.

Mr. Russell replied some are. He explained it is specific to the supplier. He also pointed out some is mandated, but they always look to make reductions wherever they can.

Mr. Agro asked where they stood regarding the school roofs.

Mr. Russell stated they would be looking to do them in the next two years. He stated all the roofs are due to be replaced.

Mr. Beckwith referred to p. 62-63. He expressed concern with past water leaks at Matthewson School and why the district did not go after the contractor or the architect to make repairs.

Mr. Russell explained the history with this problem. He stated the water seems to hit the west side of the wall.

Mr. Marlow asked what plan was in place to fix it in light of the fact it hasn't been able to be fixed until now.

Mr. Agro asked if it is a masonry wall and if it was sealed.

Mr. Russell replied yes, but the water seems to go right through the brick.

Mr. Agro asked how old the addition is.

Mr. Russell replied 8 years.

Mr. Fitzpatrick referred to p. 63 and asked about the \$50,000 to paint the running track.

Mr. Russell explained it was put out to bid, but it has not been awarded. He stated they really need to do the tracks at both schools, but that they would start with Law because it is in the most disrepair.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about field trips and if parent pay for some of that.

Mr. Cummings explained this account is supplemental and that they are enhancements to the curriculum.

Mr. Fitzpatrick referred to p. 78 – Telecommunications.

Mr. Russell explained this was put out to bid because of the ERATE. He stated they are required to bid all of it out.

Mr. Marlow referred to p. 82-83 – Open Choice Students and asked what it was and if there was any tuition.

Mr. Cummings explained open choice is a State mandated program which came out of the Sheff-O'Neil case. He explained Milford is linked to New Haven and that the State pays for the transportation.

Chairman Lema referred to p. 106 and inquired about the Imac desktops for \$73,000.

Mr. Cummings explained the district had the opportunity this year to get about 550 machines. He stated this is a new implementation and this would replace the next oldest. He stated they needed to explore the value and also the compatibility.

Mr. Beckwith referred to p. 108 – two utility pick-up trucks.

Mr. Russell stated the district has fallen behind in its replacement of vehicles. He stated if they continue to fall behind and stay on the current pace, they will end up with 21 year old vehicles.

Mr. Beckwith asked about the hockey program and if it was an increase.

Mr. Russell responded yes. He stated it is for ice time.

Chairman Lema asked about enrollment, which appears to be down.

Mr. Cummings stated it all depends on enrollment. He stated the enrollment process just began, but that they won't have final numbers until August.

Chairman Lema thanked the Board for coming and asking questions before the Board.

Chairman Lema stated the Board would stand in recess until they reconvened on March 15, 2008. The Board recessed at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen K. Huber
Recording Secretary