

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS SESSION
BOARD OF EDUCATION PRESENTATION
APRIL 25, 2017**

The Board of Aldermen held a budget deliberation session on Tuesday, April 25, 2017 in the aldermanic chambers of City Hall. Chairman Vetro welcomed everyone to the meeting of the proposed budget to hear from the Board of Education regarding their proposed budget for fiscal year 2017-2018. He asked those present to join in saluting our flag and reciting the Pledge of allegiance.

1. Roll Call

Board Members Present

B. Anderson
B. Bevan
M. Casey
D. German
A. Giannattasio
J. Golden
J. Grant
M. Hardiman
S. Shaw
F. Smith
N. Veccharelli
P. Vetro
R. Vitali

Also Present

P. Erodici, Finance Director
J. Rohrig, City Clerk

Excused

E. Beatty
B. Bier

Chairman Vetro reconvened the budget deliberation in Public Session at 7:01 p.m.

4996 Education Operations - Dr. Elizabeth Feser, Superintendent, Jeffrey Burt, Assistant Superintendent, James Richetelli, Chief Operations Officer, Carole Swift, 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 budget being presented represents a .791% increase and reflects the needs of the school district aimed at improving student learning. She continued reading from a prepared statement. She stated the BOE worked hard to find areas to make reductions and believes this budget as presented reflects the needs.

Dr. Feser thanked the Board for the opportunity to meet and review the BOE budget. She stated they BOE sought to come with a budget that is sincere and reflects the needs of the district. Dr. Feser further stated she believes the requests to be modest with savings to offset increases. The BOE sought to be fiscally responsible while maintaining and improving the quality of education. Dr. Feser reviewed a prepared a prepared handout "Summary of Budget Requests and Major Drivers." She stated the budget request is an increase of \$724,632 or 0.791%. This is the lowest increase request

in the past 11 years. The requested increase is very modest, responsible and meets the needs of the district.

Chairman Vetro thanked Dr. Feser and staff for the presentation.

Ald. Shaw asked for the estimated cost savings for the truancy officer. Jeffrey Burt explained that to date approximately \$300,000 with a possible \$650,000 by the end of the year as a result of working with a private investigator and determining residency. Ald. Shaw inquired as to the expected enrollment for the business pathway. Mr. Burt explained the new AP science as a computer pathway and that there have been excellent results. They are looking to revise existing business courses into the business pathway. The expectation is to have computer internships with local business. Ald. Shaw asked about tuition costs for students choosing to attend other schools. Dr. Feser discussed student that attend schools magnet schools. Ald. Shaw commented that she feels the BOE did a good job on the presented budget.

Ald. Golden stated she is very impressed with the education her children have received. She thanked everyone for always being accessible. Ald. Golden asked how popular is the business entrepreneurship pathway, Dr. Feser stated this was a pathway students were requesting. When asked what showed up the most was wanting to do startup businesses. Susan Glennon stated she had attended a program at Foran where the keynote speaker discussed his experiences and shared stories. He noted the one thing he found when in school was there was no focus on business. Ms. Glennon noted this pathway will help students in not only starting a business but many different aspects of running a business. Ald. Golden inquired as to the need for an additional SRO and how many are in each school. Dr. Feser stated there are 2 at the middle schools and 2 at the high schools. She explained how the SRO's are an asset to both the school, students and families.

Ald. Vetro asked why the residency/truancy position is only \$25,000. Dr. Feser explained it is a part time position. Ald. Vetro asked how savings is calculated on truancy. Dr. Feser explained savings would come from residency side. As for truancy it's about saving the student and getting the student back in school.

Ald. Casey stated he had some concerns about the residency officer. He asked isn't it done through documentation, he is concerned with how the investigation is conducted and are children being questioned. Dr. Feser indicated parents who live out of district will sometimes provide false documentation such as false address. It isn't always clear that this information is false. Mr. Burt explained children are not involved in any investigation. Some residency situations are discovered due to returned mail. Most time when these situations occur a call to the parent works and the children are withdrawn. There is an appeal process available and students will remain in school while an appeal is pending. Ald. Veccharelli asked about penalties if a student is found to be registered that is not in our district. Dr. Feser explained that the district can seek tuition reimbursement. They will this if there is a blatant violation. She further explained that usually a letter to the family is sufficient. Ald. Vitale stated the residency and truancy has always been a problem. Mr. Burt stated they have successfully resolved approximately 12 cases and there are approximately 20 open cases pending.

Ald. Vitali asked if the BOE was aware the police department did not have the additional SRO in its budget. Dr. Feser stated this was understood and had a conversation with the Mayor who suggested they request it in the BOE budget. Ms. Glennon stated the BOE hoped the Board would see the value of the SRO and add it to the budget. Ald. Vitali asked what the timeframe the SRO is in school. Dr. Feser state the SRO's at the school for the school year and it is her understanding they work for the City when school is not in session. Ald. Vitali asked if the SRO's are back charged for the time they work for the City. James Richetelli indicated the BOF did not include the SRO and they are asking that it be restored on the BOE side and created on the City side. Ald. Vitali suggested if the SRO is important than the BOE could fill and back charge the City.

Ald. Anderson asked for an explanation of how chromebooks are being used and in what grades. Mr. Burt explained chromebooks are being used in grade 2-12. He further explained that the current use is integrated classroom using Google Classroom and Google Suite for writing, collaborating and the like. Ald. Anderson asked if licensing was included in the budget amounts. Mr. Burt stated it was in the information management line under leases and licenses. Ald. Anderson asked about projected energy savings and how it compares to the current year. Mr. Richetelli explained there is a surplus in those accounts because electric is going down to solar being installed. Ald. Anderson inquired about the Food for Kids partnership with First Church. Dr. Feser explained how the food is placed in the backpacks for families in need. There are approximately 160 students being served. Ald. Anderson asked about performance bases assessments in the coming year. He state he believes they are important to help students meet benchmarks. Mr. Burt explained performance based assessments demonstrates mastery of certain skills and applying knowledge. The district is actively working on increasing performance. Ald. Anderson asked how the BOE would handle the tough decisions that might be created by the State budget. Ms. Glennon stated the BOE is committed to this budget and understand there may be some challenges. Dr. Feser stated the BOE is aware of what is happening with the State budget, they believe the budget they presented is a good budget.

Ald. Grant asked about chromebooks and what is being done for student without technology at home. Mr Burt explained that any assignments are being done at school. Teachers are sensitive to home situations and do not assume all have technology at home. Ald. Grant indicated there is talk about DDS not being funded. Dr. Feser stated that the last year a letter was received about DDS and the potential that the cost of residential outplacement may be put on the districts. Ald. Grant asked how much the residential outplacement cost. Dr. Feser stated the BOE pays the education piece and costs change.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about the Governor's proposal concerning teachers' pensions. Mr. Richetelli stated he understands that each municipality would pay 1/3 of the cost of all retired teachers. Ald. Veccharelli stated the budget is the lowest in 11 years and thanked the BOE for all its hard work.

Ald. German asked for more information on the benefits portion of the budget. Mr. Richetelli explained that in the executive summary the benefits are spelled out. BOE pays for retiree health and employees are paid on the City side of the budget. He further explained that expenses are increasing and the formula is based on the premiums. Ald. German asked what is the employee contribution and what is being done to maintain costs. Mr. Richetelli explained the contributions are contractual. They have been successful in negotiating HSA's which has been a considerable savings.

Ald. Bevan thanked the BOE for bringing a budget under 1%. He stated the Board votes on a total budget, not line item and requested that any cuts not come from the arts programs. Ald. Smith seconded Ald. Bevan's request to not cut arts programs. He asked if the BOE had ideas where they would take from should the ECS funding is cut. Ms. Glennon stated this was premature for the BOE to be discussing. If a cut happens the BOE will have to take a hard look and make some difficult decisions.

Ald. Giannattasio asked what the justification for the Board of Finance cutting the SRO. Dr. Feser stated it was not on the City side of the budget. Ald. Giannattasio asked if adding it back would be parity to all the schools. Dr. Feser stated it would. Ald. Giannattasio stated that when SRO's were implemented truancy was to be part of their job and that between SRO's and the administration truancy could be handled. He asked how important the residency/truancy officer is to the BOE. Mrs. Glennon stated there are no SRO's at the elementary schools. Mr. Burt indicated that \$12,000 was spent on private investigator last year and this year it may surpass that number. This position is for the more difficult cases that need to be pursued and require significant effort. Mr. Richetelli indicated a private investigator will not be funded if the position is created. If the position is not created the expenses will have to go back to contracted services. Ald. Giannattasio asked if the BOE pays for New Haven magnet schools. Dr. Feser indicated that New Haven does not yet charge tuition. Ald. Giannattasio asked if the staff reductions in special education was due to declining enrollment. Ms. Swift stated that this was correct and that based on the enrollment numbers they were able to cut staff. Ald. Giannattasio asked about utility costs and solar. Mr. Richetelli stated it is too early to predict, but there will be savings overtime. Ald. Giannattasio asked about the possibility of closing schools because of declining enrollment. Ms. Glennon stated there was not current discussion concerning school closures.

Ald. Veccharelli and Ald. Shaw made and seconded a motion to recess at 9:11 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Toni Jo Weeks", with a horizontal line above it.

Toni Jo Weeks
Recording Secretary