

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS SESSION
BOARD OF EDUCATION PRESENTATION
APRIL 30, 2014**

The Board of Aldermen held a budget deliberation session on Wednesday, April 30, 2014 in the aldermanic chambers of City Hall. Chairman Vetro welcomed everyone to the meeting of the proposed budget for the Board of Education for fiscal year 2014-2015. He asked those present to join in saluting our flag and reciting the Pledge of allegiance and remain standing for a moment of silence for Marren Sanchez.

1. Roll Call

Board Members Present

B. Anderson
B. Bier
M. Casey
S. Fontana
D. German
A. Giannattasio
D. Kubek
S. Shaw
F. Smith
G. Stanford
N. Veccharelli
P. Vetro
R. Vitali

Also Present

Mayor Benjamin G. Blake

Excused

J. Golden
M. Hardiman

Chairman Vetro stated he would entertain a motion to come out of recess.

Ald. Veccharelli and Ald. Shaw made and seconded a motion to come out of recess. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board came out of recess at 7:12 p.m.

Chairman Vetro welcomed Dr. Feser, Mr. Cummings, Mr. Richetelli and Ms. Glennon, Chairman of the Board of Education.

Dr. Feser thanked Chairman Vetro and the Board for the opportunity to speak this evening. She deferred to Ms. Glennon for comment.

Ms. Glennon reading from a prepared statement stated the budget this year is a .754 increase over the current budget and pointed out it is the lowest over the last 10 years. She continued reading stating the budget reflects the needs of the school district which included three major priorities; 1) integration of Common Core State Standards. 2) program expansion and support and 3) school security and culture. She stated the budget stays the

course. Ms. Glennon also stated the budget requested recognizes and supports a responsible thinking that went into the budget.

Dr. Feser elaborated on the three major priorities for the district. She stated technology is needed as part of the integration of the Common Core Standard. She also spoke of the related testing being implemented, SBAC and pointed out all testing is now done on the computer. Referring to the handout, Dr. Feser continued with an explanation.

Mr. Richetelli addresses the third priority regarding school security and culture. He stated this is in the forefront especially after the events of the past week at Jonathan Law High School. He explained the district applied for a State grant for security. Mr. Richetelli also stated there are many security measures that have been put in place over the last 8 months. He also pointed out this budget included the Board's share of the four resource officers. He stated they are looking toward the future regarding technology, i.e. camera, etc. He continued with an explanation of the handout explaining the major adjustments where they reallocated and meet the district's priorities. Mr. Richetelli also spoke of the transportation contract with Durham Bus Company and a recent adjustment they were able to make regarding how fuel is purchased. He explained they can now buy diesel fuel wholesale through the city, which will help reduce fuel costs. He also stated Durham has some gas powered buses which will be available to the district. Mr. Richetelli stated the district will receive a grant from the State that will help with the computers/classroom technology in the amount of \$254,252. He continued with an explanation of the handout. He explained they were able to find a reduction in salaries of approximately \$150,000 due to the elimination of 12 teachers, 14 paraprofessionals and 2 secretary positions, which he stated is all due to declining enrollment.

Dr. Feser reiterated it was hope the aldermen would recognize and support this budget.

Ald. Anderson stated he wished to express his appreciation of the time each has taken to be here tonight. He commented so much as happened this past week to change the responsibilities of each administrator here tonight. He offered his continued support and asked the school board to reach out of the aldermen for anything.

Ald. Vitali thanked Dr. Feser and her staff for being here tonight. He also offered his condolences to the Marren family, administration at Law and the teachers there. With regard to the budget he stated he recognized as a board of aldermen their responsibility was to look at the bottom line and not each line item, but that his concern was more with the long range planning. He referred to p. III and IV of the budget book regarding the Board of Education's assumptions and priorities and questioned them since the long range planning committee has not completed its work. He stated no plan is in place. He questioned the \$80,000 in consultant fees and asked if those costs were part of this budget and if any additional monies were spent on top of the \$80,000. He spoke of the physical plants, school reorganization as to the Common Core Standard. He also spoke about the configuration of the school districting, adding that a K-8 configuration allows you to know the kids much better. He spoke of time on task, questioned whether a longer school day or school year had been considered. He addressed the Long Range Plan. . . .

Ald. Veccharelli raised a point of order, reminding Ald. Vitali that tonight was about the school budget.

Ald. Vitali stated he did not wish to be interrupted.

Ald. Veccharelli stated he was waiting on his point of order and reiterated tonight was about the budget, not long range planning. He stated Ald. Vitali had not asked a question as to the budget before the aldermen. He stated his point of order is that the aldermen stick to the budget.

Ald. Vitali stated his question refers to p. IV of the budget.

Chairman Vetro stated he would agree with Ald. Veccharelli and asked Ald. Vitali to stick to the budget book before the aldermen and ask questions concerning the budget.

Ald. Vitali stated his question is regarding p. IV, the Board of Education 2014-2015 Budget Assumptions.

Ald. Anderson interjected asking that the question be allowed so they could continue.

Ms. Glennon explained anything relating to the long range planning committee's work is not reflected in this budget and would be in the 2015-2016 budget.

Ald. Vitali asked about the \$80,000 for consultants and if that was from this budget.

Ms. Glennon replied yes. She also pointed out no additional monies were expended.

Ald. Vitali asked about a longer school day or school year.

Ms. Glennon stated the Board has not gotten that far and that it had not been discussed.

Ald. Anderson asked about the special education audit and what phase they were in. He also expressed concern over the number of paraprofessional positions that were being eliminated and asked the impact on inclusion classes, self-contained classes, etc. He asked if it had been fully vetted and if any additional plans had been implemented.

Mr. Cummings stated regarding the audit that there had been an extensive amount of work with teachers and administrators regarding issues raised in the audit, as well as instructional practices, curriculum work and teacher responsibility to SRBI. Mr. Cummings stated they want to be more reactive. He explained the reduction in the number of paraprofessionals is in response to declining enrollment. He stated they are committed to those areas not impacted.

Ald. Anderson asked about the RTT model and if students would be taken out.

Mr. Cummings stated they are pushing for more services in the classroom. He stated as a general practice when students are taken out of class, they are more likely to struggle. Mr. Cummings stated the focus is to be student specific and being strategic in all areas.

Ald. Anderson asked about the after school programs at Pumpkin Delight and John F. Kennedy Elementary School and asked about the success of those models and if they would continue and how it was working from an intervention standpoint.

Mr. Cummings stated across the board they have had overall success. Mr. Cummings explained any decrease in the budget only reflects any decrease in enrollment. He stated they have not looked at expansion at other elementary schools in the district, since they have not seen a need.

Ald. Giannattasio asked about the transportation budget and the proposal for the reduction of two buses and the controversy that ensued.

Mr. Richetelli stated the Board of Education commissioned an audit through Transportation Advisory Services (TAS). He explained they looked at the entire operation, including safety, efficiency and overall good transportation. He stated TAS identified the fact that there are a high number of students who live within the walking distance guidelines in the Board of Education's policies which he added is consistent with the State guidelines. He stated there were a high number of students that lived in the boundaries that were being provided transportation. Mr. Richetelli stated the district hired a traffic safety expert who looked at 1,000 students to determine if they were getting a bus. It was found that a number of the students being transported, were within walking distance. He stated it was also found through this traffic safety expert that a number of students were identified that could be classified. Mr. Richetelli stated the district is in the process of notifying those students that have been identified. He stressed the policy, walking distances and safety hazards are not changing, but that there are those students that have been identified that should be walkers and will be reclassified as such.

Ald. Giannattasio asked if this was some type of oversight.

Mr. Richetelli stated no and explained in one area there had been a large construction projects a number of years ago which made the area unsafe to walk, so those students were bused during the project, but never reclassified back to walkers when the project was completed. He also stated traffic signals were put in place in areas making a safe walking route but those students were never placed on walker status.

Ms. Glennon added the Board of Education makes every effort to uniformly apply their policies which she stated has been a focus of the Board. She stated there were other ways they looked at efficiency, i.e. consolidating bus stops. She stated basically they were looked at transportation overall for efficiency.

Ald. Veccharelli thanked the Board of Education for the lowest budget in 10 years, especially in light of what people are going through, i.e. paying bills, etc. He asked about the reduction of the two buses which equated to \$80,000. He asked if the kids that will now be walkers were reflected into the \$80,000.

Mr. Richetelli explained every bus does three runs a day, high school, middle school and either K-2 or 3-5. He stated the goal is to do that by reducing two buses.

Ald. Veccharelli expressed his hope that a lot of thought went into the 2 mile distance for walkers.

Ms. Glennon stated they have looked at the transportation policy over the last two years and no one has ever raised the issue of distance. She stated they continue to work within their current policy.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about the computers. He asked if they are working toward virtualization of PC's or services and as an example cloud computing.

Mr. Cummings stated they are virtualizing some services. He stated it was done at the Parsons building and two other buildings. He stated they found that capacity was an issue. Regarding cloud computer, he stated it has changed the way they think and that they are exploring it as a way to handle the SBAC testing.

Ald. German offered his thoughts and prayers to the Sanchez family, everyone at Law and the entire community. He asked about healthcare costs, noting the high figure and what if anything was being done to address the costs.

Mr. Richetelli stated with the new teacher contract they are offering an optimum health savings account, however, currently it is only an option. He also stated they are seeing some savings on the board side. He explained they pay retiree medicare over 65 supplement and that all teachers will be going on the State Board over 65 which he stated would be a considerable savings. Regarding the wellness program, he stated they have had discussions but they just are not getting the participation.

Ald. German asked if it would make sense to include a part time position to get people fired up and focused.

Mayor Blake stated the Human Resources Director is working to implement a new wellness program.

Ald. Smith asked about out of district tuition and if the majority of it is special education. He also asked if the increase was reflective of the number of students placed out of district or declining enrollment.

Mr. Richetelli stated this area is somewhat of a moving target as they never really know the full amount of costs. He also stated costs continue to rise with out of district placement.

Dr. Feser stated the number in the budget is reflective of students currently in the system and who will be with the district the following year. She also pointed out they do receive a small amount of reimbursement. She went on to explain costs and the need for placement. Dr. Feser pointed out that Milford has one of the lowest out of district costs than many other districts.

Ald. Smith asked why ECS funds go back to the general fund.

Dr. Feser stated it is state law.

Ald. Shaw asked about the energy conservation services. She asked about budget item 4104 and the costs Milford pays.

Mr. Richetelli explained this is now Synergistics. He explained basically they guarantee the cost of their program. He stated what this really comes down to is changing the culture in our community. He stated it is not just about turning off lights. Mr. Richetelli stated the program has been extremely successful to date.

Ald. Kubek thanked the Board of Education for a fabulous job and expressed condolences over the last few days. Regarding the energy position, she asked if the Board anticipated continuing the need for that position, and if the position at some point could go away.

Mr. Richetelli stated it is not something that has formally been discussed, adding there is another year left in the contract with the program. He stated the person currently in the position is constantly in their buildings and

frankly speaking is a “nudge”. Mr. Richetelli stated the person is constantly making sure everyone stays on task. He stated without someone doing that on a daily basis, he felt people would forget and go back to their old ways.

Ald. Bier commented he is not a fan of points of order, moving the question, etc. He stated in the future he asked his fellow aldermen to consider that when asking for a point of order, etc. Referring to p. 23 of the budget book he asked about transportation costs which appear to total \$1.5 M.

Mr. Richetelli explained the statutory obligation to provide transportation for special needs where identified. He stated the bulk of that cost is out of district placement transportation.

Ald. Bier commented it seemed exorbitantly high. He asked how far a person could be traveling.

Mr. Richetelli stated it is more to do with the type of transportation, i.e. wheelchairs, etc, so basically it is the type of service. He also pointed out they do go out to bid each year.

Ald. Stanford added these are children that cannot speak for themselves and many times confined to wheelchairs, gurneys, etc. She also offered her condolences to the Board and the education community. She went on to read an email she received.

Ald. Gianattasio referred to the mention of the implementation of the Common Core Standard and the mandates of technology, repair and teacher evaluations. He asked if those mandates are reflected in dollars in this budget.

Dr. Feser explained the standards were established 4-5 years ago and that Milford started implementation at that time. Regarding teacher evaluations, she stated that plan was mandated by the State, but that Milford had already developed a plan which included measuring student performance as well as teacher performance. She explained curriculum is aligned to Common Core and has to support instruction and is rated.

Ald. Giannattasio asked if the curriculum is in place.

Mr. Cummings stated pre-K through grade 5 is aligned to Common Core Standard, as well as grades 6-8 with regard to core instruction. He stated science is on hold right now. As to world language, there is nothing. He stated it is aligning teacher performance to student performance.

Ald. Giannattasio asked how the cost affects the district.

Mr. Cummings stated there is no impact as to textbooks. He stated they work with the teachers and that a lot of work is developed in-house. He stated the dollars are all to meet student expectation. Mr. Cummings stated it is also the teacher portal where they have spent approximately \$15,000 on data portals which are a big piece of SRBI, special education, etc. He stated basically cost is ongoing. He stated much of their work has been about raising expectations and a common set of expectations.

Ald. Giannattasio asked if there is a deadline to meet curriculum.

Mr. Cummings responded no. He stated as to measuring assessment, basically a district that does not realign their curriculum risks lower test scores.

Dr. Feser added that pacing is the critical issue. She stated they are dealing with Common Core Standard which includes new testing and teacher evaluations all at the same time.

Chairman Vetro thanked Dr. Feser and all the administration and Ms. Glennon for coming tonight. He also stated he wished to express his thoughts regarding the memorial ceremony for Maren Sanchez, which he stated was a beautiful, well done program. He stated what has been done over the last few days for the children, parents and schools is just remarkable and he thanked Dr. Feser and all for their dedication.

Ald. Giannattasio and Ald. Veccharelli made and seconded a motion to recess at 9:08 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen K. Huber
Recording Secretary