

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS SESSION
APRIL 22, 2020**

The Board of Aldermen resumed virtual budget deliberation session regarding the Board of Finance's recommended budget for fiscal year 2020-2021, on Thursday, April 22, 2020 via ZOOM. Chairman Vetro called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. asking those present to join in saluting our flag and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Roll Call

Board Members Present:

E. Beatty
C. Gaynor
A. Giannattasio
J. Golden
J. Grant
G. Harla
M. Parente
F. Smith
W. Smith
A. Sutton
J. Tranquilli
P. Vetro
R. Vitali
W. Willis

Also Present:

Mayor Benjamin G. Blake
J. Rosen, Chief of Staff
P. Erodicti, Finance Director
K. Fortunati, City Clerk

Excused:

M. Hardiman

Chairman Vetro welcomed everyone to the 2020-2021 budget deliberations. He stated tonight's meeting was the education portion of the budget process. Chairman Vetro reviewed the virtual meeting format.

Education Operations (p.94)

Susan Glennon, Chairman Board of Education thanked the Board for the opportunity to present their budget. She read from a prepared statement. Ms. Glennon stated the Board takes the budget very seriously while looking to move to the next level to honor the Board of Education's mission statement. Ms. Glennon stated the Board made some reductions to the Dr. Cutaia's requested budget and the Board of Finance further reduced the budget by approximately \$500,000. She discussed how things are different now due to Covid-19 and that schools are working remotely. Ms. Glennon stated that it is anticipated that when they return to school students needs may increase and the goal to provide the best services to the students.

Anna Cutaia, Superintendent Board of Education, thanked the Board of the opportunity to review the Board of Education budget. She stated that the schools are deeply into remote learning and the

transition and quick and efficient due to community support. Dr. Cutaia stated she believes the school system is meeting the need of families and children. She provided a PowerPoint presentation highlighting budget priority, budget assumptions and system improvements. Dr. Cutaia discussed framework for higher quality education. She stated the framework is not built on passing fads, but what rather what is believed to be best for Milford students. Dr. Cutaia stated the priorities of the Board of Education are the enhancement and wellness of students. She provided a review of 2019 and progress made by Milford Public Schools. Dr. Cutaia provided information on the Chromebook program and integration into all schools. She commented that that World Language as stated in grades K-1 and that they continue to expand the internship program. Dr. Cutaia stated the Board of Education's requested budget is \$98,034,756 an increase of 3.109%. She further stated that the Governor's executive orders require that Board of Education employees continue to receive pay and that 80% of the budget is salaries and benefits which means the current budget will continue to be expensed despite school closures. Dr. Cutaia also stated that food services continue to provide breakfast and lunch 7 days a week issuing approximately 8,000 meals per week. Dr. Cutaia discussed at home technology for K-12 and staff who are working remotely. She stated that when schools reopen it will be with a new look toward educational recovery. Dr. Cutaia stated that when plans for the future were developed, they looked at the achievements of the students. She reviewed high quality instruction and plans to raise achievement scores. Dr. Cutaia discussed decreasing class size in grades 3-5 and that class sizes will be impacted if the budget realizes any additional cuts. She commented on expanding World Language to Pre-K – 2 and play based experiences. Dr. Cutaia reviewed elementary science labs, upgrades to high school science labs, wingman program, system improvements, 7-year curriculum review, community connection centers and the continuation of online systems. Dr. Cutaia provides graphs showing the makeup of the education budget. She stated the Board of Education plan is built on 3 solid pillars to bring students to the next level of success and achievement.

Ald. Willis asked what other languages other than Spanish are offered. Dr. Amy Fedigan, Assistant Superintendent, stated Spanish in grades K-1, middle and high school, French at middle and high school and Latin at high school.

Ald. Grant stated he received calls and letters concerning the Media Aide positions being removed. He asked that with he change due to Covid-19 thoughts about keeping those positions to provide sense of security to students. Dr. Cutaia stated she thinks about how to open schools everyday. She further stated that the 15 Media Aide positions are being replaced with 8 integrated structural support positions. She stated it would be irresponsible if the Board didn't look for efficiencies and due to technology there is a need for different position.

Ald. Parente asked if there would opportunity for students bridge over the summer given the different type of learning due to Covid-19. Dr. Cutaia stated will depend on the Governor opening schools. She stated that if schools are permitted to open they would like to provide students with a summer experience.

Ald. Tranquilli asked if the school day was lengthened how that would impact contractually. Dr. Cutaia state she is not necessarily in favor of lengthening the school day, but if necessary that would need to be negotiated. Ald. Tranquilli asked if a lengthened school day would cost more. Dr. Cutaia stated it

would cost more. She further stated the education recovery will cost more and everyone needs to be prepared.

Ald. F. Smith stated the elimination of Media Aide positions is a controversial subject this year. He asked if eliminating the Media Aide positions there would be a loss of one on one and if there anyway to maintain the positions to keep the close relationships. Dr. Cutaia reviewed the instructional support structure and stated that relationships are already forged in many areas. She further again reviewed the 8 integrated specialists and their role. Dr. Cutaia stated she hears everyone, but does not believe there will be a change in plans. She further stated that even without removing the Media Aide position there is only a need for 8.

Ald. Vitali asked if there is a reduction in work force clause in the working agreement. Jim Richetelli, Operations Director, stated he Media Aides are part of the Food Services contract and the Integrated Specialists will be with the IT union. He further stated they have had discussions with the union and the positions are different with different skill sets. Wendy Kopanza, Human Resources Director, reiterated the Media Aides are in the Food Service union and cannot bump food service employees.

Ald. Vitali asked when schools are reopened if the school is lengthened what the new school day will look like. Dr. Cutaia stated they need to decide where in the curriculum to start once schools open up. She stated they are still trying to make that determination, but know the curriculum will most likely be modified. She further stated she does not like the idea of an extended day and recovery will be multi-year.

Ald. Gaynor asked if class size was reduced from 25 to 23 how many would be impacted. Dr. Cutaia stated it would result in a 1.0 increase.

Ald. Smith stated he was reviewing public comment testimony and one in particular discussed statistics of library usage and number of students without Chromebook. He stated that it seems the Media Aide position is crucial and asked how they can be cut. Dr. Cutaia state that devices are available for all students and that the proposed budget plans to purchase interactive devices from K-1. She discussed the statistics, the ability of students to check in and out their books and student abilities

Ald. Tranquilli asked if common core is being removed from the curriculum. Dr. Cutaia stated that high quality instruction is not chasing the latest fad, but rather what the school system believes is best and that it is being built based on expertise of our educators. She stated they write their own curriculum, it is not taken off a shelf or provided by consultants.

Ald. Tranquilli asked for an explanation of the Wingman Programs. Dr. Cutaia stated it is a peer to peer program that trains student leaders to ensure every student has someone of significance they can turn to.

Ald. Grant asked if there is any instruction in relation to Earth Day and environmental issues. Dr. Cutaia provided an explanation of environmental sciences opportunities.

Ald. Giannattasio asked if the education budget was cut \$938,000 by Board of Finance. Dr. Cutaia stated the Board of Finance cut \$500,000. Ms. Glennon stated \$438,00 had been cut by the Board of Education from Dr. Cutaia's budget request. She stated projects that were bonded and piloting of flexible furniture were reasons for the reduction.. Ald. Giannattasio asked if the Board of Finance provided an explanation for their cuts. Dr. Cutaia stated they did not provide feedback. Ald. Giannattasio asked how the Board of Finance cuts will work with the budget. Dr. Cutaia stated that given everything that is happening with Covid-19 she has not been able to digest it yet, but will do the very best to keep it away from the students.

Ald. Gaynor asked if school nurses, crossing guards and SRO's are part of the budget. Ms. Glennon stated school nurses and crossing guards are in the City's budget and SRO's are shared with City and Board of Education budget.

Ald. Vetro commented this is the largest increase in the last 10 years.

Ald. Smith asked for brief overview of objectives and fiscal implications of science labs. Dr. Cutaia stated the hope is to instill the desire to be science professionals in young people. She briefly discussed the implementation of hands on science experiences in elementary schools.

Ald. Willis asked why boys and girls hockey are separate items and why girls are less. Jim Richetelli explained that boy's hockey is hosted by Milford where girls hockey is hosted by Notre Dame. He stated that both boys and girls pay \$200 each as a participation fee.

Dr. Cutaia stated that the decision concerning Media Aides was not about the individuals who fill the positions. She stated that just as they are passionate about young people, they are passionate about the adults in the school system. Dr. Cutaia stated she honors the work and contributions provided by the Media Aides. She further stated that with progress comes change which can be difficult. Dr. Cutaia stated this decision was not made light heartedly. She further stated that individuals in those position could potentially have a role in the school system in other positions within Milford Public Schools.

Ald. Sutton and Ald. Willis made and seconded a motion to recess. Motion carried unanimously. The Board recessed at 8:56 p.m.

Chairman Vetro announced the Board would stand in recess until Monday, April 27, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,



Toni Jo Weeks
Recording Secretary