

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS SESSION
APRIL 17, 2024**

The Board of Aldermen resumed its budget deliberation session regarding the Board of Finance's recommended budget for fiscal year 2024-2025, on Wednesday, April 17, 2024, at City Hall Auditorium, 110 River Street, Milford. 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

M. Arciuolo, II
E. Beatty
B. Bevan
M. Casey
J. Federico
P. Healy
A. Fowler
J. Jenkins
S. Marlow
H. Mulrenan
R. Pacelli, Jr.
W. Smith
P. Vetro
R. Vitali
W. Willis

Also Present

Mayor Anthony S. Giannattasio
P. Erodici, Finance Director

Excused:

Chairman Vetro welcomed everyone to the 2024-2025 budget deliberations. He stated tonight's meeting will be for the education operations portion of the budget process.

Ald. Marlow and Ald. Willis made and seconded a motion to come out of recess. Motion carried unanimously.

Education Operations (p. 94)

Susan Glennon, Chairman Board of Education, read from a prepared statement. She discussed how the budget is adopted by the Board of Education. Ms. Glennon discussed the effects of the pandemic, contractual obligations and inflation. She stated the budget reflects student voice and

choice. Ms. Glennon stated the curriculum and budget reflect investment in the community and will be a place where young families will want to call home.

Anna Cutaia, Superintendent Milford Public Schools, provided an overview of the proposed budget. She presented slides demonstrating the accomplishments and celebrations of students and staff. Dr. Cutaia discussed student performance last academic year. She reviewed the process in developing the budget by reviewing progress and performance over the last 20 years. Dr. Cutaia reviewed the Board of Education commitments and goals to which the budget is adopted. She discussed the cornerstone documents and budget priorities – Vision of the Learners, Developmental Relationships Framework, High Quality Instruction and Equity Framework. Dr. Cutaia discussed characteristics of highly effective educational organizations. She reviewed the systemic improvement strategy a superintendent utilizes to ensure student engagement, teacher knowledge and skill and rigor and relevance of content. Dr. Cutaia discussed the systems, structures and conditions that must be considered to build the core for the highest level of education. She discussed the progression of education and workplace over the years. Dr. Cutaia discussed specialized needs of students requiring more specialized training. She discussed career pathways being responsive to today's workforce offering basic and hands-on training. Dr. Cutaia discussed future career pathway plans for Milford Public Schools. She stated the budget request is \$111,285,770 representing a 4.7% increase. Dr. Cutaia discussed the drivers contributing to the budget proposal. She stated 77% of the budget is committed to salary and benefits. She stated there is a net increase of 2.0 certified and 6.3 non-certified positions. Dr. Cutaia discussed school counselors moving from ARPA to the general fund. Dr. Cutaia discussed the addition of a behavioral support program at the elementary level. She stated this would support students that need additional instruction outside of the normal classroom. This includes a specialized support program, the addition of a behavior support specialist and clinical therapists through partnership with Bridges. Dr. Cutaia discussed CIAC changes and school facilities. Dr. Cutaia discussed summer training, conditioning, and training. She discussed contracted increases in transportation. Dr. Cutaia discussed system improvements in elementary, middle and high school and the ability to offer different choices. She discussed partnership to provide for 2 teachers-in-residence. Dr. Cutaia discussed the newly revised curriculum that will be instituted for academic years 24/25. She discussed savings found within the budget building process. Dr. Cutaia reviewed budget increases over the past 16 years and the current proposed budget. She stated salary and benefits reflect the majority of the budget.

Ald. Federico discussed education health insurance contribution amounts for the current fiscal year and the proposed 24/25 budget. Mr. Erodici confirmed the numbers cited by Ald. Federico were correct. She asked Mr. Erodici to discuss why there is a decrease this year. Mr. Erodici the line item in the budget which includes health and dental insurance represents the contribution required from the general fund to balance the budget in the health insurance fund. He stated expenses must be looked at to make sure there is revenue to balance the budget. Mr. Erodici explained how this is accomplished with the use of actuaries and negotiating the stop-loss. He discussed the fund balance and use for offsetting increases. Mr. Erodici stated the reason for the decrease is that claims have grown, but not as fast, and the fund balance was used to help offset the increase. Ald. Federico asked how much the savings were last year. Mr. Erodici stated it was a little over \$5 million and split between the City and Board of Education side of the budget. Ald. Federico asked if the Board of Education budget would be less if it were included. Ald. Vitali stated page A-18 has a layout of the budget. Ald. Vitali asked for information on performance and student grades, smart balance

assessment. Dr. Cutaia stated she does not have the information with but provided some highlights of information provided to the Board of Education. Ald. Vitali stated he would like to understand where Milford stands and other municipalities. Dr. Cutaia stated the CMT scores were flat. Discussion ensued concerning student achievement and performance. Ald. Vitali stated the trend in population over the past 5 years has declined by 2,000, which impacts student enrollment. He asked what cuts would be made if only a 3.4% increase was approved. Dr. Cutaia discussed the strategy of creating the reduction list created by the Board of Education for conversation purposes. Ald. Vitali asked Dr. Cutaia to describe an instructional coach's day. Dr. Cutaia stated instructional coaches have been in the system for a while. She discussed the new model of coaching for all teachers and working with small groups of students. Dr. Cutaia stated the new model started in the 2022/2023 school year and is in its second year. She discussed how the model was determined by responding to student data and how to best support students. Dr. Cutaia discussed reallocating resources to support instructional coaches. Ald. Vitali asked if there is an added certification needed for an instructional coach. Dr. Cutaia stated there is no added certification. Discussion ensued concerning the function of the instructional coach. Ald. Vitali asked if any instruction coach was hired using ARPA funds. Dr. Cutaia stated no instruction coaches were hired with ARPA funds. She stated counselors were hired using ARPA. Ald. Jenkins asked if student achievement is the intended outcome. Dr. Cutaia confirmed that is correct. Discussion ensued concerning student achievement for 2015 to 2019. Ald. Jenkins stated towns in the DIRG are improving where Milford remains flat. He discussed the importance of student achievement and asked how achievement results can be improved. Dr. Cutaia discussed reviewing student achievement with the Board of Education and planning the instructional core for higher achievement. She stated the budget are the resources being requested to support the work for higher achievement. Discussion ensued concerning student achievement, measurements and resources needed for improvement. Ald. Healy asked when the surplus to grounds and zero-based budgeting was implemented. Dr. Cutaia stated it was implemented when she became superintendent. Ald. Healy asked if an effective team approach is taken to look for savings within the budget. Dr. Cutaia discussed the budget process and how all requests are heavily scrutinized. Ald. Healy asked if business processes will continue if the Board of Finance recommended budget is approved. Dr. Cutaia confirmed it will continue. Ald. Healy asked what facilitates the increase to facilities. Dr. Cutaia referred to page A-21 which delineates schools and projects. Sean Brennan, Assistant Superintendent of Business Operations discussed prioritizing projects and how safety and security receive the highest priority. Ald. Healy asked if the zero-based budget works. Mr. Brennan stated it does work and is the best approach to budgeting. Ald. Bevan asked for an explanation of teacher-in-residence. Dr. Cutaia stated the individual is similar to a student teacher and takes courses outside of the school day and work side by side with teachers. She stated the commitment is they will be hired into the school system the following year. Ald. Bevan referred to page A-13 regarding salaries regarding superintendent and assistant superintendent to be determined. He asked if the salary amounts are in the budget from the prior year. Dr. Cutaia stated they are included within the budget. Ald. Arciuolo discussed the importance of behavioral support and asked for an explanation of the Bridges grant. Dr. Cutaia stated Bridges applied and was approved for the grant. She stated the clinicians are employees of Bridges that will work within the schools. Ald. Casey asked if implementing common curriculum had any resistance. Ms. Glennon stated this was a program instituted by Dr. Feser prior to her retirement and when the population was surveyed consistency was important to the majority. Ald. Beatty asked about obtaining a qualitative study of instructional coaches to discern how to align the budget with goals going forward. Ald. Marlow asked where the educational philosophy is headed and if facilities are able to handle them.


Dr. Cutaia discussed social, emotional learning, onboarding framework and place of belonging for student learners. She discussed HQI focuses and responses to student needs. Ald. Marlow asked if the space is available or will classrooms be shifted to accommodate. Dr. Cutaia stated they are always looking at reuse of space and utilization of mobile furniture. She discussed eliminating desk and chair connection and use of mobile furniture to allow for different uses of space. Ald. Jenkins discussed organizational chart and asked if there are teacher leaders that are not listed. Dr. Cutaia stated there are some that are not listed as part of the leadership. Discussion ensued concerning teacher leaders, roles and responsibilities. Ald. Vitali asked how much is in the non-lapsing account and what projects it will be used for. Mr. Brennan stated there is not a non-lapsing account. He stated all money is expended by the end of the year. Any funds placed in a non-lapsing account must be approved and must be stated what will be used. Mr. Erodici stated funds in the account were used for Covid related expenses. Discussion ensued regarding use of non-lapsing account funds. Ald. Smith asked when he can expect to receive demographic data previously provided. Dr. Cutaia stated the budget process took precedence and she and the Board of Education will be reviewing and responding to his email request.

Chairman Vetro recessed the meeting at 9:50 p.m.
Chairman Vetro reconvened the meeting at 10:00 p.m.

Ald. Willis asked if the funds reduced by the Board of Finance are not restored what cuts will be made. Dr. Cutaia discussed a document provided discussing changes. Ald. Pacelli stated it is his understanding that all materials necessary have been provided and he is in favor of restoring the budget. Ald. Mulrenan stated the purpose of the budget meetings is to learn and have clarity. She discussed how assessments and results are utilized to assist with budget processes. Ald. Mulrenan stated she supports the educational system and investment in the future. Ald. Federico stated she's reviewed the list prepared in response to the Board of Finance reduction. She asked if the reduction is not restored where would the coaches be removed or would the reductions come from the list. Ms. Glennon stated if reduced the Board of Education would need to decide. Dr. Cutaia stated the document is a suggested approach. She stated existing positions were made instructional coaches. No new positions were added. Dr. Cutaia stated cutting coaches would result in less support for teachers and students.

Ald. Willis and Ald. Mulrenan made and seconded a motion to recess until Monday, April 22, 2024. Motion carried unanimously. The Board recessed at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Toni Jo Weeks
Recording Secretary