1. BET Budget Comm. Dept. Review Day 1 Documents

Documents:

SUB_TO_APP_BET_BUDGET_DEPT_REVIEW_DAY_1_MINUTES_02-04-15.PDF
APPROVED_BET_BUDGET_DEPT_REVIEW_DAY_1_MINUTES_02-04-15.PDF
TOWN OF GREENWICH  
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION  
BUDGET COMMITTEE  

DAY ONE - BOE OPERATIONAL AND CAPITAL BUDGET REVIEW FY 15-16 BUDGET  
MINUTES  

Town Hall Meeting Room – 9:00 A.M.  
Wednesday, February 4, 2015  

Present:  
Committee: Marc V. Johnson, Chairman; Mary Lee A. Kiernan, Jeffrey S. Ramer, Leslie L. Tarkington  
Staff: Peter Mynarski, Comptroller; Roland Gieger, Budget Director; Dr. William McKersie, BOE Superintendent of Schools; Ben Branyan, Managing Director of Operations; Robert Lichtenfeld, Director of Human Resources; Mary Forde, BOE Director of Pupil Personnel Services; Dr. Ellen Flanagan, Deputy Superintendent of Schools; Irene Parisi, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Learning (CIPL); Linda Valentine, BOE Assistant to the Superintendent; John Hopkins, Director of Food Service; Maureen Tracy, Financial Analyst; Phil Dunn, Director of Digital Learning and Technology; Ron Matten, Director of Facilities; Barbara Ormerod-Glynn, Director Greenwich Library; Kevin McCarthy, Director, Perrot Library  
Board: John Blankley, Bill Drake, William Finger, Sean Goldrick, Randall Huffman, Michael Mason, Art Norton, Nancy Weissler  
Selectmen: Peter Tesei, First Selectman; Drew Marzullo, Selectman; John Toner, Selectman  
Others: Barbara O’Neill, Chairman, Board of Education; Jennifer Dayton, Board of Education Member; Debbie Applebaum, BOE Member; Laura Erickson, BOE Member; Peter Bernstein, BOE Member; Steve Warzoha, RTM Member; Leslie Moriarty, RTM Member; Lucia Jansen, RTM Budget Overview Committee Member; Christine Edwards, RTM Member; Jason Auerbach, RTM Member  

Mr. Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:02 A.M. He welcomed everyone to the BET Budget Committee meeting to the Board of Education (BOE) and Greenwich Libraries FY2015-2016 Operating and Capital Budget Review. He complimented the BOE for providing an operating budget within the 2.0% increase BET guidelines.  

BOE Budget Review  

Opening Comments - Ms. O’Neill, the Board of Education Chairman, gave brief introductory opening remarks. She commented that the focus of the presentation would be on achievement for all students. Dr. McKersie noted that the BOE Budget was within the guidelines for flat
staffing despite an enrollment increase, and pointed out that 91% of the Budget reflected contractual obligations leaving only 9% for improvements and initiatives.

**Budget Overview** - Mr. Branyan covered the budgetary highlights section of the BOE presentation emphasizing that only $271K was available to be spent after salaries. Savings from efficiencies, reductions and reallocations contributed to making additional funds available.

The Committee then proceeded to go through the BOE Operating Budget with a number of questions from the Committee and answers and comments from BOE officials. Specific sections receiving questions included Salaries showing a 2.3% increase; Payments for Temporary Special Projects (11.6%); Professional & Other Special Services (199.2%); Travel Expenses (15.9%); Rental of Buildings (26.1%); and Rental of Software (43.3%).

The Committee also reviewed expenses under items such as Special Education, Transportation and the Magnet School Program with Mr. Branyan, Dr. McKersie and Mrs. O'Neill.

**Human Resources - Staffing, Enrollment, Benefits, and the Human Resources Capital Management System** - Mr. Lichtenfeld, the Director of Human Resources, began this session by telling the Committee that there had been no increase in staff despite slightly increased enrollment. He stated that different staffing models are used between the elementary, middle and high school sectors that employ different class size parameters and internal reallocation had been made to accommodate the increased enrollment. He reiterated that budgets are created almost a year in advance, and that enrollment can change the class size creating the variance between Budget and Actual number of teachers required.

Members of the Committee asked Mr. Lichtenfeld to update the table that supplemented the previous year’s Budget when he cited savings in benefits based on reducing the number of teaching assistants and replacing them with teachers.

Mr. Blankley questioned if reductions in teaching assistants caused a loss of efficiency to which Dr. McKersie responded that there had been time-savings achieved by reallocation of time in instructional schedules.

Mr. Finger asked if a reduction in quality had been noticed due to less frequently scheduled classes, Dr. Flanagan indicated that it had been found that sustained time in language instruction actually increased quality of learning.

Ms. Tarkington asked that anticipated MISA rental fees be broken out of the plant operation line item costs.

**School Lunch Program** - Mr. Johnson noted that contributions from the General Fund have grown from $123,000 in FY14 to a request for $450,000 in FY16. He expressed the Committee’s concern that this Fund was nowhere near the break-even point as was originally intentioned.

Mr. Hopkins provided an overview of factors impacting revenue from the school lunch program: 1) new federal and state regulations of nutrition standards eliminating some student-preferred foods and beverages; 2) volume of recession and post-recession purchasing; 4) volume of Free and Reduced Price student meals; 5) shortfall caused by food price increases without compensating federal reimbursement increase for Free & Reduced Price meals; 6) weather related closings; and 7) school calendar with fewer full service days. He advised that he could
not identify additional efficiencies because of higher food and maintenance costs; the alternative was eliminating FT positions thereby reducing payroll and benefit costs. Mr. Johnson asked if the BOE should consider outsourcing all meal operations. Mr. Hopkins responded that, while no one wants to eliminate their own position, it is something they should consider. Dr. McKersie and Ms. O’Neill concurred. Ms. Kiernan referenced an error in the budget books indicating a 6.95 FTE increase in part-time employment in the school lunch area, and Mr. Hopkins clarified that there were no new full time or part time positions in the FY ’16 budget.

**Capital Open Appropriations** - The Committee, Mr. Branyan and Mr. Matten reviewed unspent appropriations including those for MISA, Glenville and Hamilton Avenue, and Mr. Branyan reviewed the plans for completing these projects.

**Digital Learning Environment (DLE)** - Phillip Dunn, the Director of Digital Learning and Technology, reviewed the status of the project for the Committee including the project’s three phases of implementation. He noted that Phase I was accomplished on-time and on-budget. Phase I implementation involved two elementary schools, (Hamilton Avenue and Riverside schools for all grades) with tablets given to all Fifth Graders and teachers. Each teacher was receiving professional development training to achieve program goals of 1) critical thinking; 2) self-regulating learning; 3) receiving quality feedback on their work; 4) personalizing learning; 5) establishing readiness for Smarter Balanced Assessments.

Mr. Dunn reviewed the FY16 request for new and additional devices to additional schools, training, and a management consultant to follow the day-to-day implementation. He also alerted the Committee to the need for expanding the infrastructure to ensure its reliability for the volume of additional users and devices and the eventual plan for moving data to a cloud location.

Whereas the number of devices to be deployed by November 1 would increase from 3,000 to 12,000, Mr. Dunn noted that no additional staff would be required. He commented that although the scale increased, cost would decrease from a previously projected 5-year $17 million initiative that it was now, to a 7-year $13 million project.

Ms. Kiernan asked for clarification of how these projected economies would be achieved and Mr. Dunn responded that: 1) Chromebook devices required a ratio of 1/5000 technical administrators to equipment; 2) cost of device replacement had been reduced; 3) cloud storage was less costly.

Mr. Ramer asked why the number of reserve machines was increased; Mr. Dunn responded that delays in device replacement created a barrier to learning. Based on the tablet pilot school experience, the number of reserve machines was increased to 10%.

Ms. Kiernan asked whether it was appropriate that the leased Chromebooks were treated as operating or capital items. Ms. Tarkington suggested TOG’s auditor, McGladry, review the accounting procedures. Mr. Mynarski stated that he would clarify with both the Town’s auditor and bond counsel.

**New Lebanon Elementary School** - Mr. Branyan introduced the topic saying the two main reasons for the issue were: 1) increased enrollment pressure on building space and 2) the need for a plan to respond to a state citation for District racial imbalance. BET members Ramer and Drake were asked to join the discussion as they served on the BOE’s committee to review school building options.
The Committee discussed the state’s acceptance of BOE’s racial balancing plan to add 50 additional magnet school seats, the BOE’s three site options, the community’s preferences for site location, schematic building plans, the State’s diversity grant aid for qualified construction costs, and steps necessary for TOG’s Municipal Improvement approvals.

The BOE apprised the Committee of a revision to funds needed in FY16 for architectural and engineering plans from $3.23m to $2.85m and the BOE clarified that the application was for a building in the area described by Scheme C. The Committee considered conditioning the request to ensure that adequate site testing be conducted prior to significant work done on construction documents. The BOE stated that Phase I and partial Phase II environmental testing was already being conducted.

Mr. Ramer expressed concern that there was no clarity to the feasibility of building on the Scheme C site but he urged the Committee not to allow a year to be lost before beginning the process. He recommended the release of an amount for soil testing as a step forward.

Ms. Tarkington favored TOG retaining control for decision-making relative to the environmental testing and analysis, as well as for weight-bearing geo-tech and soil testing rather than an appointed Building Committee of volunteers taking charge prematurely.

Mr. Mason asked the Committee to consider the consequence of the magnet programming failing to redress the racial imbalance in light of 3 district schools having vacant space.

**BOE Capital improvement Plan FY16** - Mr. Branyan stated that the average investment made in school maintenance, and major projects such as digital learning over a ten (10) year period had been $9.8 million but it was a downward investment trend.

The group reviewed the $32 million new school building for New Lebanon of which there was a potential of state reimbursement of 80% of eligible construction costs, effectively reducing TOG’s contribution to $9 million. Mr. Branyan commented that the new building would increase the per student square footage from 141sf to 162 sf. Ms. Tarkington, asked whether the lag in state funding progress payments, observed in recent BOE projects including MISA would be similar for NL.

Mr. Branyan next itemized additional Capital Improvement projects included building structure, mechanicals, interiors, specialty spaces, athletics, technology, equipment, and vehicles. The total FY16 Capital budget was estimated at $15,167,000 with New Lebanon and Digital Learning.

Mr. Matten advised that the list included the last year of a five-year program to update all school bathrooms. FY16 included the commencement of a 5-year painting cycle, multiple school lighting upgrades and window repairs and replacements.

Ms. Kiernan asked whether there were any appropriations planned for the fields at the three Middle Schools in the BOE’s 15 year capital plan. Mr. Branyan responded that these fields were not in the 15 year capital plan because they were sufficient for the BOE’s educational purposes.

BOE Presentation concluded at 3:08 P.M.

**Libraries Budget Review**
After greeting the Committee and expressing thanks for TOG support and interest, Ms. Ormerod-Glynn and Mr. McCarthy said they would welcome questions to assist in the presentation of their budgets.

Mr. Johnson indicated that their Budget showed an overall increase of 2.50% - above BET guidelines of 2.0%. He asked whether Greenwich Libraries could reduce the budget closer to a 2.0% increase.

Libraries Operating Budget - Ms. Ormerod-Glynn based the Greenwich Library FY16 Budget on past usage and programming that generated visitation and online volume. She cited accomplishments such as 10% of the town participating in reading and activities surrounding “Boys in the Boat”, the 2014 Greenwich Reads Together program selection and the Library’s nomination for national recognition by Rep. Jim Himes. Among 2015 initiatives, Ms. Ormerod-Glynn suggested that a streamlining of the physical collection was among the projects planned.

Ms. Tarkington asked where the budget reflected income from rental of the Cole Auditorium. Ms. Ormerod-Glynn said it did, but would review whether fee increases would be warranted.

Mr. Ramer asked if overtime and salary for temporaries where opportunities for economy. Ms. Tarkington suggested the libraries return with expense reductions to bring their budgets in line with the BET guidelines. Ms. Ormerod-Glynn said she would review for savings.

Mr. McCarthy was asked why the Perrot Library’s budget increased 5% overall; he explained it reflected current employee salary increases.

In reply to Ms. Kiernan’s question about the impact of the ADP payroll system on library operations, both library directors responded that they found it burdensome to implement but hoped it would begin to show benefits soon.

Libraries Capital Budget - Ms. Ormerod indicated that there was an estimated $197k requested for new carpeting.

Ms. Tarkington asked how the public/private partnership had dealt with projects in the past to better understand which projects were TOG’s responsibility. She asked to receive Friends of the Greenwich Library’s audited financial statement and most recent Federal 990 filing.

Mr. McCarthy indicated the Perrot Library capital request would be for air conditioning of the children’s building.

Ms. Kiernan asked Ms. Ormerod-Glynn about unspent appropriations; Ms. Ormerod-Glynn responded that one was a hold-back due to an unsatisfactory installation and the other was a lapsed appropriation.

Mr. Johnson concluded the day’s session by asking for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Upon a motion by Mr. Ramer, seconded by Ms. Tarkington, the Committee voted 4-0 to adjourn at 4:17 P.M.
Respectfully submitted,

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Marc V. Johnson, Chairman

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL
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