1. BET Budget Comm. BOE Operational & Capital Budget Review Documents

Documents:

APPROVED_BET_BUDGET_COMM_BOE_OPERATIONAL_AND_CAPITAL_BUDGET_REVIEW_02-07-13.PDF
SUB_TO_APP_BET_BUDGET_COMM_BOE_OPERATIONAL_AND_CAPITAL_BUDGET_REVIEW_02-07-13.PDF
TOWN OF GREENWICH
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION
BUDGET COMMITTEE
BOE – OPERATIONAL AND CAPITAL BUDGET REVIEW FY14 BUDGET
MINUTES
Town Hall Meeting Room – 9:00 A.M.
Thursday, February 7, 2013

Present:
Committee: Joseph L. Pellegrino, Chairman; William Finger, 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; Kim Eves, BOE Director of Communications; John Curtin, Special Projects Manager, Dr. Ellen Flanagan, Deputy Superintendent of Schools, Irene Parisi, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Learning (CIPL), Chris Winters, Headmaster of Greenwich High School, Maureen Tracy, Financial Analyst, Ronald Matten. BOE Director of Facilities

Board: Michael Mason, Chairman, Board of Estimate and Taxation, Robert Brady, Sean Goldrick, Randall Huffman, Marc Johnson, Mary Lee Kiernan, Art Norton

Others: Leslie Moriarty, Chairman, Board of Education; Jennifer Dayton and Barbara O’Neil, Board of Education Members

Mr. Pellegrino called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M. He welcomed everyone to the BET Budget Committee meeting on the Board of Education FY14 Operating and Capital Budget Review. Mr. Pellegrino took the time to give special thanks to Leslie Moriarty for her years of service on the Board of Education and especially her contributions as the current Chair of the Board of Education. Mr. Pellegrino also gave special thanks and welcomed the new Superintendent of Schools Dr. William McKersie. Mr. Pellegrino then turned the presentation over to Board of Education personnel.

SPEAKERS

Ms. Moriarty initiated the presentation proceedings by introducing all Board of Education staff members in attendance. Ms. Moriarty gave an overview of the major topics to be covered which included but were not limited to: a discussion on the adoption to Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Digital Learning, District-wide restructuring, addressing racial imbalances, unfunded mandates and enrollment decline.

Ms. Moriarty then turned the program over to the first topic speaker Dr. William McKersie. Dr. McKersie started by emphasizing the “Team Concept”. He drove home the point that everyone at the Board of Education will work as a team under his leadership. He added that “Team” is what drives us and “Team” is what shapes us. Dr. McKersie then continued by giving the Committee a presentation on the Town of Greenwich School District Improvement Plan. Dr. McKersie’s remarks centered on the following areas:
• **Primary Factors in Budget Development.** Dr. McKersie stated that the District is devoted to strategic principles for college and career readiness. These principles include common core, digital learning, multiple measures of student growth and school innovation which he added will be discussed at length during this day long presentation. Dr. McKersie detailed his and the Board's academic goals relative to reading, writing, and mathematics. Dr. McKersie laid out the Strategic Planning Cycle that included; District and School Strategic Improvement Plans, Diagnostic Memorandum and Monitoring Reports. Finally, he discussed his impressions of the Greenwich and Connecticut fiscal environment.

• **Student Achievement.** Dr. McKersie pointed out Greenwich is a high performing school district always striving for improvement. Greenwich has a strong evidence of increasing scores and we are well above the State and National averages. He added, the challenges are how can we improve at a faster rate and how do we eliminate the achievement gap?

• **CMT and CAPT scores.** Dr. McKersie told the Committee that Greenwich is at five year highs in 2012 for CMT scores in all categories and five year highs in CAPT scores in most categories.

• **Academic Successes.** Dr. McKersie detailed a litany of successes in the areas of academics, high graduation rates and high college participation rates, athletics and arts.

• **New Connecticut Accountability System.** Dr. McKersie talked about the new State Accountability System that identifies a School Performance Index (SPI) with an overall target of 88 and also provides District and School Performance Targets. Dr. McKersie listed a number of Greenwich schools of distinction.

• **Priorities.** Dr. McKersie firmly stated his top priorities. His priorities are an adoption of Common Core State Standards, implementing and attaining a Digital Learning Environment, restructuring district-wide and attainment of racial balance as mandated by the State of Connecticut.

• **Goals of the School District.** Dr. McKersie quantified the target goals of the Board as follows; 83% in reading and mathematics by 2015, 87% in writing by 2015, and 75% completing Algebra I by 8th Grade by 2015.

Dr. McKersie concluded his remarks and Mr. Pellegrino indicated that he had two questions and offered these questions to anyone that could answer. His first question was actually a request on defining and quantifying unfunded mandates. Mr. Pellegrino requested that someone get back to the Committee with the actual cost of unfunded State mandates to the Greenwich School District. Secondly, Mr. Pellegrino lamented that the schools are tired looking and he wanted to know if there is something further the Town should be doing. Mr. Branyan responded that the schools had spent approximately $63 million, excluding new construction, over the last eight years. Unfortunately, a majority of the spending was on roofing, boilers, air conditioning and other projects that you do not see when you visit a school. Ms. Moriarty also responded that the schools are collectively sound, safe and in good condition. However, she stated they don't look good aesthetically.
The next speaker was Mr. Branyan who gave the Committee a budget overview. Mr. Branyan detailed how the budget went from $139,357,220 to $142,099,644 for FY 2014, which translates into a 1.97% increase. Mr. Branyan explained that the two major drivers of the increase were salary increases and $1,126,552 dedicated to the Digital Learning initiative.

Dr. McKersie pointed out that this portion of the presentation will cover four hot topics; Common Core State Standards, Digital Learning Environment, District-wide Restructuring, and Addressing Racial Balance. Dr. McKersie introduced Dr. Flanagan to speak to the first topic of adopting Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Dr. Flanagan addressed CCSS by stating what they are, how they were developed, what the benefits are, what will be the impact on teaching and learning, and how they will be assessed. Mr. Pellegrino asked Dr. Flanagan about the costs to the district, where we are on the curve and the impact on teachers, to which she responded to all of Mr. Pellegrino’s questions.

The next topic, the Digital Learning Environment, was addressed by Ms. Parisi and Mr. Branyan. They explained that the original concept is a two year plan with 5,264 devices for all teachers plus a phased roll-out to students, software investment, and Professional Development for teachers to support transformation in year one. The cost in year 1 would be $1,126,552. There was a video presentation developed by a consultant through a Request for Proposal, who also developed the cost figures and enhanced the concept. Mr. Pellegrino asked about the status of the report by Pearson, the consultant, and that he would like a copy of the report for the members of the BET. Dr. McKersie responded the report is in its final draft status and would forward the report as soon as it is completed. At this point, there was an extended debate on whether the cost for Digital Learning should be paid out of operating funds versus capital project funds. There was no final consensus on where to budget the expense for Digital Learning at this point in the budget deliberations.

The third hot topic discussed was District-wide Restructuring presented by Dr. Lichtenfeld. Dr. Lichtenfeld stated that with the arrival of Dr. McKersie there was a district-wide restructuring with a net loss of three supervisory personnel and other staff reductions. Dr. Lichtenfeld could not go into further detail on the personnel losses because a number of them had not been fully informed of the changes at the date of this meeting.

The fourth hot topic was Addressing Racial Balance presented by Dr. McKersie and John Curtin. Materials prepared by Mr. Curtin were distributed on this subject. They dealt with raising student achievement, improving racial balance and efficiently using school facilities. A school with a minority enrollment that is over or under 25% from the district grade level minority percentage is cited as racially imbalanced and requires the district to file a plan with the State of Connecticut Department of Education to address this imbalance. Dr. McKersie reported that $250,000 has been added to the budget to address racial imbalances that currently exist in Hamilton Avenue, Julian Curtiss and New Lebanon schools. Mr. Pellegrino asked if Dr. McKersie would object to a subject to release on the $250,000 until which time the specifics of the need to spend these funds were specified. Dr. McKersie indicated he had no objection to this approach. As part of this presentation, statistics were also provided detailing Greenwich Public Schools elementary building utilization for years 2013 through 2018.

The meeting adjourned for a lunch break at 12:45 P.M. and reconvened at 1:10 P.M.

After a short lunch break, Chris Winters, Headmaster for Greenwich High School, gave a presentation. The presentation was highlighted by an orientation video prepared for incoming students and their parents into Greenwich High School. Dr. Winters highlighted the video
presentation by enumerating the staffing levels at the high school by category. In addition, Dr. Winters listed a number of accomplishments at the high school in recent years that dealt with academic excellence, achievements in the arts and athletic championship teams.

The next topic for discussion was the District Success System. A detailed document was distributed to address this subject. The document dealt with the 2011-2012 fiscal year and contained a number of statistics such as; Student Achievement Core Knowledge and Skills and Dispositions, Demographics, Learning: Access and Opportunity, Teaching: Improving Classroom Instruction, Resource Management and Stakeholder Satisfaction: the Harris Study. Mr. Pellegrino asked a series of questions on the statistics which were answered by Mr. Curtin.

The final topic for the day was the Capital Improvement Plan, relative to the schools. Mr. Pellegrino led the Committee through each capital project requested as follows:

- **Technology - $642,000** – this is a project for Wi-Fi, cabling network infrastructure and various backbone switches for schools. There was an extended discussion about the Network Infrastructure additional request for $200,000. This total request was originally for $442,000 and $200,000 was added which prompted questions about this item being duplicative and whether or not it should be part of the Digital Learning request and the $200,000 being removed.

- **Interiors - Furnishings - $1,036,000** – this is a request for whiteboards, auditorium seating replacements, food service equipment and school furniture replacements. There was a discussion regarding the feasibility of using the Greenwich High School MISA seating for either Central or Eastern Middle School. Mr. Matten told the Committee he had not investigated this matter but would look into seeing if a swap for MISA seating for Middle School seating was practical or compatible.

- **Building Envelope and Structure - Capital Maintenance - $325,000** – this is a project to install a handicap lift to the gymnasium at Central Middle School, hallway roofing at Western Middle School and repointing the existing building for $200,000 at Cos Cob Elementary School. There was an extended discussion about water leaks on the façade at the schools and the issue of repointing at Cos Cob School. Mr. Matten told the Committee these funds were for a review and not the actual work to repoint. This subject became contentious with the Committee members on the need to call for a review to repoint the Cos Cob School building. Mr. Matten told the Committee that he was the third facilities manager in the last couple of years and he needed time to do an assessment on a variety of issues in all of the school buildings.

- **Building Envelope and Structure - Abatement - $250,000** – this request is for the District-wide asbestos abatement and repair program consistent with the District Asbestos Manage Plan. There were no substantive comments on this request.

- **Consultant Fees for Next FY Capital Projects - $730,000** – this request is for 2014-2015 proposed capital projects and a physical plant asset tagging and condition assessment. The funds are needed in order to be able to start construction projects when school ends next year.

- **MEP & Utilities - Mechanical System Upgrades - $53,000** – this request is for individual air conditioning units at Riverside, Julian Curtiss and Old Greenwich Schools. The
original request was for $1,853,000. $1,800,000 was cut to meet the BET request to limit total capital requests to $8 million.

- **Interiors – Bathroom Renovations - $1,450,000** - this is a request for District-wide bathroom renovations. The original request was for $1,300,000. The request was adjusted to increase Julian Curtiss by $300,000 and decrease New Lebanon by $150,000. At this point, the Committee turned its attention to the long standing issue of whether or not the Town and Board of Education capital project requests are exceeding the ability to get the projects completed. The Committee questioned Board of Education staff about whether they have reached capacity and used the New Lebanon bathroom renovation as an example. Mr. Matten responded that in regards to this issue they are reaching a point of diminishing returns and probably could not accomplish more, or in other works, they are reaching maximum capacity to get all of the projects done in the relatively small window of summer recess for schools.

- **Interiors – Finishes - $443,000** – this request is for interior painting district-wide and there were no discussions on this matter.

- **Interiors – Carpentry - $810,000** – this request is for hardware equipment replacement, millwork and ceiling and lighting replacements at a variety of schools. Mr. Pellegrino noted that embedded in this request was the inclusion of $180,000 for millwork at Parkway School. Mr. Pellegrino noted in previous discussions during this day long presentation that Parkway School is becoming a candidate for closure. He questioned why replace millwork at Parkway School, if the school could be potentially closed. Dr. McKersie responded that possibility to close Parkway School is at least a few years down the road, if ever closed and it doesn’t seem prudent to wait any longer on this request.

- **Building Envelope & Structures – Life Cycle Replacements - $951,000** – this a request for the replacement of doors and windows at a variety of schools. The original request was for $1,101,000 and a dormer window replacement project for $150,000 was deferred from the request. This prompted Mr. Ramer to revisit the issue of capacity. Mr. Ramer asked why the project was being deferred and the Committee held another discussion on the District’s ability to get all of their capital project requests done in a timely manner.

- **Athletics - $175,000** – this request was for gymnasium work at Dundee School. There was no substantive discussion on this issue.

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- **MEP & Utilities – Electrical System Upgrades - $1,110,000** – this request is for electrical system upgrades at Eastern Middle, New Lebanon and Riverside Schools. Ms. Tarkington asked if the surplus generated in the capital project requests for generators could be used for Eastern Middle School. Mr. Matten was told there is about $245,000 left over in the current year generator request and how much would this generator cost.
Mr. Matten responded that the new generator at Eastern Middle School would cost about $450,000.

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This concluded the review of the individual capital projects. However, the debate escalated among the members of the Budget Committee on the $2 million dollar cut to the $10 million dollar request for the Board of Education capital project request for 2013-2014. Mr. Ramer expressed his concerns and asked Board of Education officials if they were comfortable with the revisions. Mr. Branyan stated he felt the reductions are not good for the District if the pattern of declining capital budgets were to continue. Mr. Matten also responded that he did not view them as cuts, but rather elongations of the program. Mr. Pellegrino repeated his stand on the rationale for the cuts is based on the fact that he doesn't want to add money back into the program if they can't spend it. Mr. Finger concluded this portion of the session by stating that deferring these project requests is too much and he is troubled by the cuts. Ms. Tarkington pointed out that BOE administration resources will be needed as MISA begins construction and when the GHS soils remediation project begins.

Ms. Tarkington brought up the increase in the BOE TOO due to the request by Greenwich Academy for the Town to provide two public health nurses to serve their school. The BOE will provide information on GA student enrollment residency.

Mr. Pellegrino concluded the day's session by thanking everyone and the meeting adjourned at 5:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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