

**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 6, 2014**

Present:

Committee: Marc V. Johnson, Chairman; Mary Lee 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; 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), Linda Valentine, BOE Assistant to the Superintendent, Maureen Tracy, Financial Analyst, Phil Dunn, Director of Digital Learning and Technology, Ron Matten, Director of Facilities

Board: John Blankley, Bill Drake, William Finger, Sean Goldrick, Randall Huffman, Michael Mason, Art Norton, Nancy Weissler

Others: Barbara O'Neill, Chairman, Board of Education; Jennifer Dayton, Board of Education Member

Mr. Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:05 A.M. He welcomed everyone to the BET Budget Committee meeting on the Board of Education (BOE) FY15 Operating and Capital Budget Review. He thanked the Superintendent and BOE for submitting an operating budget that, at a 2.1% increase, was within the BET's guidelines.

SPEAKERS

Opening Comments - Ms. O'Neill, the Board of Education Chairman, gave brief introductory opening remarks. She noted that the focus will be on achievements for all students.

Budget Overview - Mr. Branyan covered the budgetary highlights section of the BOE presentation. He said that this budget is a fiscally responsible budget that supports strategic initiatives. He added that the proposed \$143,939,653 operating budget, which represents a 2.1% increase, was unanimously approved by the BOE. He mentioned that the 13-14 actual-to-14-15 budget increase in FTE's is 1.7. Mr. Branyan noted that this budget supports a projected enrollment of 8,707, down 87 student's budget-to-budget. He also added that the actual-to-budget decrease in students was actually 49 students which will be discussed further during the Human Resources – Staffing, Enrollment, Benefits, and HRCMS session with Dr. Lichtenfeld.

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 are currently three basic models used to allocate certified staff Kindergarten through Grade 12 and all three are used concurrently. They are as follows:

- Grade – level enrollment-based model
- Grade - level standards for program needs
- Grade – level standards for student needs

Dr. Lichtenfeld added that some positions use a hybrid of the models. Dr. Lichtenfeld also stated that they use different staffing models between the elementary, middle and high school sectors that employ different class size parameters.

Mr. Huffman had a question about Assistant Principals in the middle schools. Dr. Lichtenfeld and Mr. Branyan asked the Committee members to turn to page 173 in the BOE budget book. Collectively, they addressed Mr. Huffman's questions by stating that previously they budgeted 4.8 FTE's Middle School Assistant Principals in 2013-2014. For this budget, they were converting certain part-time Assistant Principals to full-time with for a total of 6 FTE's in the Middle Schools.

Mr. Johnson stated that there seems to be confusion over the enrollment numbers. Dr. Lichtenfeld and Mr. Branyan together stated that some of the confusion stems from the staffing for special needs students. They said that you will not know the staffing needs for special education students until they are identified. Therefore, you need to use the actual staffing levels from year-to-year. They went on further by directing the Committee to page 170 in the BOE budget book to reconcile the differences. Mr. Johnson asked if the BOE and the Town's Budget Director, Roland Gieger, had collectively reconciled the enrollment differences. In response, Mr. Gieger and Dr. Lichtenfeld stated they were In agreement.

Mr. Johnson asked Dr. Lichtenfeld about the Human Capital Management System and how it would be implemented. Dr. Lichtenfeld said that they are currently working with the Town on the process and it was a massive undertaking. He added it is early in the implementation process and they are concentrating on the payroll part of the implementation now, as opposed to the benefits piece that will be addressed later in the process. Mr. Johnson asked if there are any hang-ups in the process. Dr. Lichtenfeld responded that it is too early to tell. Again, he reiterated that it is a massive endeavor with the BOE side employing 1,400 regular employees and 10,000 substitution coverage's per year. However, Dr. Lichtenfeld assure everyone he felt the new system will reduce errors and make the overall process more efficient,

Pupil Personnel Services – Special Education (SPED) Overview – Ms. Forde, the Director of Pupil Personnel Services and Special Education, gave the Committee an overview of the Special Education environment in the Greenwich School system. She started by saying that the first step in the process is to identify special needs students in both the public and private sectors. Ms. Forde stated that they use a process labeled the Individual Education Plan (IEP) along with Evolve. Evolve is an optional program involving special education services. After evaluating student needs, a school may decide to employ 1 certified teacher in lieu of 4 professional assistants. She said the Evolve staffing model is not budgeted which lead to some the confusion previously discussed over staffing levels.

Ms. Forde told the Committee that after the special needs students are identified and their needs are established the Greenwich School system offers the following related services:

- Speech Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Nursing
- Counseling
- Transportation
- Sensory Supports

Ms. Forde added that there are different categories of specially designed instruction such as the following:

- Preschool, School-Age, Transition
- Placement Options such as; Push-in, Pull-out, Off-site, and Out-of-District
- Consultation and Staff Support
- Parent and Family Supports
- Extended School Year

Ms. Tarkington asked Ms. Forde if she could quantify the number of public and private identified students. Ms. Forde said that there are currently 50 to 60 privately identified students. She stressed that although they identify them, they don't have to pay for them. Ms. Forde added that there are currently about 897 identified public school students. Ms. Tarkington asked if she could get a breakdown of the public school students, by school, and whether they are in state or out-of-state. Dr. McKersie and Ms. Forde stated they will supply Ms. Tarkington with a breakdown of those requested figures.

Ms. Kiernan asked if they can quantify the total costs to pay for special education for the Greenwich School District. Ms. Kiernan also asked if the figures listed on page 32 in the BOE Budget Book details these costs. Both Mr. Branyan and Ms. Forde cautioned that the costs listed on pages 32 and page 45 are not all-inclusive. There are additional costs attributed to special education that are found in other parts of the budget.

Strategic Priorities – Personalized Learning – Dr. McKersie gave an overview of the next section of the budget presentation. He told the Committee that the Greenwich School District works in a Personalized Learning Environment. Dr. McKersie said they have broken this discussion up into the following seven categories with school experts speaking to each category as follows:

- 1. Educator Quality, Evaluation and Development** – Ellen Flanagan, the Deputy Superintendent, presented this session on educator evaluations and development. She referred to the current process called System for Educator Evaluation and Development, also referred to as SEED. Dr. Flanagan told the Committee about the current practice, under SEED, where there is an initial Goal Setting and Planning period, followed by a mid-year check-in and finally an end-of-year review. She described the process where teachers are self-assessed and then rated by the applicable School Administrators. Dr. Flanagan informed the Committee that the current evaluation process mandated by the State of Connecticut is currently being phased in by the State.
- 2. Standards** – Irene Parisi, the Assistant Superintendent, told the Committee that the Greenwich School System is governed by a set of standards determined by a number of

State of Connecticut and national organizations. She stated they are a framework for curriculum development, instructional practices and assessments that are rigorous, consistent and lead change with expected performance indicators. Dr. Parisi said they are what students are assessed by.

3. Board Goals – Barbara O’Neill, the Board of Education Chairman, stated that the BOE adopted three goals in June 2012 that will drive district improvement planning through the 2014-2015 school year. They are as follows:

- **Reading:** The percentage of Grade 3 students at Goal/Mastery in CMT Reading will be 83% by 2015.
- **Writing:** The percentage of Grade 8 students at Goal/Mastery in CMT Writing will be 87% by 2015.
- **Mathematics:** The percentage of 8th grade students successfully passing Algebra I will be 75% by 2015 to be measured by standardized test and GPS district math test.

Mr. Blankley asked if universal pre-kindergarten is a goal. Ms. O’Neill responded that it is not a goal, but would be nice to achieve. Ms. Dayton also responded that currently 96% of Greenwich children are in some degree of pre-kindergarten instruction. Ms. Forde added that they are trying to reach out to the remaining 4% that are not in pre-k schooling.

4. Digital Learning Environment (DLE) – Phillip Dunn, the Director of Digital Learning and Technology, gave the Committee an update on the status of the Digital Learning Environment. Mr. Dunn reminded the Committee that \$1,126,000 was appropriated in 2013-2014. He said that they are currently in Phase I with implementation in two elementary schools, Hamilton Avenue and Riverside schools for all grades. Phase II will include the 3 Middle Schools and Grade 6 district wide. The Phase II implementation request is for \$992,000. They are currently purchasing Phase II devices (iPads) with Phase I funds, as planned. Phase III will include the entire school district

Mr. Ramer asked Mr. Dunn to appraise the progress so far. Mr. Dunn stated that the children at Hamilton Avenue and Riverside schools, the Phase I schools, are embracing it as he is witnessing first hand.

5. Multiple Measures – Dr. Parisi presented the Multiple Measures module. Dr. Parisi stated that the Greenwich School System uses multiple measures for educational decisions. She told the Committee that they put the measures into four categories; 1) Program School Process, 2) Perceptions, 3) Student Assessment, and 4) Student/Demographic.

6. Achievement Gap – Facility Utilization & Racial Balance – Dr. McKersie reported on the Achievement GAP topic. He reported that they are narrowing the Achievement GAP with the following results:

- In the last ten years the low-income student population has more than doubled
- The minority population increased from 23% to 33.6%

- The Achievement GAP in reading (CMT) was reduced by 20 percentage points
- The Achievement GAP in math (CMT) was reduced by 18 percentage points
- Initial gains in the narrowing gap are plateauing

Mr. Ramer expressed an opinion, alluding back to the Digital Learning discussions, that with a number of students going home to single parent families or homes lacking with adequate resources to afford computers, that the Achievement GAP under the Digital Learning environment could widen.

Dr. McKersie spoke to the customization of learning that follows from digital technology and stressed that homework would not be dependent on computers to the detriment of those who have less technology at home. He went on to lay out the district's approach to narrowing the gap. Dr. McKersie offered the following:

- The District is developing a plan to address the Achievement GAP by March 2014.
- The targets are Title I Schools such as Hamilton Avenue, Julian Curtiss, New Lebanon and Western Middle School. These are schools with high concentrations of students from low-income backgrounds.
- Enlist outside expertise for review and support.
- Work with the community to develop a plan.
- The plan includes consideration for addressing Racial Balance.

7. Student Well-Being – Mary Forde, the Director for Pupil Personnel Services, gave a presentation on student well-being. Ms. Forde told the Committee the District offers the following relative to student well-being:

- Crisis Management – to provide a safe school climate and promote positive behavior.
- Health Management - to provide short term counseling with family support and agency connections.
- Homebound Instruction – to provide assistance to homeless students, incarcerated students and Section 504 qualified students.
- Health Screenings – to provide health screenings with instructional and articulation support.
- Response to Intervention through Student Assistance Teams and Lunch Bunch/Social Support teams.

This concluded the Strategic Priorities session. The Committee members wanted to know if the BOE officials wanted to discuss Racial Balancing, which was not discussed to this point in the presentation. Dr. McKersie and Ms. O'Neill both stated they are working on a solution to racial

balance to be reported to the State of Connecticut. Dr. McKersie also reported that the racial balance topic will be discussed at the April 2014 BOE meeting. Dr. McKersie did report that redistricting is off the table.

The meeting adjourned for a lunch break at 1:05 P.M. and reconvened at 1:35 P.M.

Capital Improvement Plan and Open Appropriations – The budget hearings proceeded with a discussion on the Capital Improvement Plan, led by Mr. Branyan and Ronald Matten, the Director of Facilities.

Mr. Branyan led off with a reconciliation of the unspent capital budget appropriations as of January 31, 2014. The balance at this time was \$11,370,294. Mr. Branyan factored out the ongoing MISA Capital Project and detailed the status of remaining projects to arrive at a remaining available balance of \$591,404. Mr. Branyan stated that this balance would be potentially returned as unspent.

Mr. Johnson asked Mr. Branyan if he could do the same reconciliation with a start date of June 30, 2013. Mr. Branyan agreed to supply the Committee with the reconciliation, as requested.

Mr. Branyan also displayed a graph that showed a 9 year BOE Capital spending pattern averaging \$10.1 million. The graph with this average factors out large projects such as; Hamilton Avenue School, Glenville School and MISA.

Wrap-up and Final Questions and Answers Session-

The Committee then proceeded to go through the BOE Operating Budget with the following questions from the Committee members and answers and comments from BOE officials:

- **Account #51070 (Other Salaries)** – Mr. Branyan answered this account is to pay out longevity payments.
- **Account #51100 (Overtime)** – Mr. Branyan was asked about the 25% increase. He responded that the budget number has not been accurate and they were trying to true up a number of accounts to be more accurate; this being one of them. Mr. Branyan also referenced the 2012-2013 large expenditure that was the result of Hurricane Sandy and did not anticipate spending at those levels again.
- **Accounts #51300 & 51317 (Payments for Temporary Services)** – It was explained that these payments are for substitute teachers.
- **Account #51390 (Payments for Temporary Services – Special Projects)** – Mr. Branyan explained these are charges for summer school teachers and the increase of 5.3% is tied to contractual agreements.
- **Account #51490 (Professional and Other Services)** – Mr. Branyan stated that a number of these funds are used to fund for the narrowing of the Achievement Gap as previously discussed by Dr. McKersie. He also said that a further breakdown of the account for consultants could be found in pages 275 to 277 of BOE budget book.
- **Account #52097 (Tuition Town Employees)** – It was explained that this account is to reimburse teachers for professional development training.

- **Account #52070 (Tuition-Non Special Education-Out of District)** – This account is for students with drug addictions and the increase was a true up to reflect actual costs.
- **Account #52340 (Rental of Buildings)** – Mr. Branyan explained that the increase in this account is attributed to the use of St. Catherine’s Church for a lease to house the RCLP program.

Ms. Kiernan asked Dr. McKersie if he could recount an experience he had with the First Selectman Peter Tesei and officials from the Parks and Recreation Department last summer relative to school facilities up keeping. Dr. McKersie said that various school officials expressed concerns about the upkeep of school facilities during the summer months and were concerned about their appearances prior to the opening up the schools. Dr. McKersie said that they held a tour with the First Selectman and Parks and Recreation officials to point areas of concern. He said that the purpose of the tour was to show Parks and Recreation official’s areas of concern that the Parks and Recreation employees were responsible for. Dr. McKersie did add that the Parks and Recreation employees did react to the concerns and stepped up their efforts.

The Budget Committee members and BOE officials went through each capital project request in the FY 2014-2015 Capital Budget. BOE officials basically gave a brief description of each project as noted in the project informational sheets.

There was an area of concern involving projects being done at Greenwich High School this summer with soil remediation and the MISA project underway. Specifically, the Committee wondered if the request for \$75,000 to refurbish the GHS track was in direct conflict with the soil remediation, In addition, and of greater concern, was the request to do the GHS replace roofing project for \$1,720,000 while the MISA project was underway. BOE officials conceded that this project probably should not be done concurrently with the MISA project at the GHS site.

Mr. Finger made a suggestion to BOE officials that they should substitute this project with another, since it appears the BET would probably not fund the roofing project this year with MISA underway.

Mr. Johnson concluded the day’s session by thanking everyone and the meeting adjourned at 3:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Mynarski, Recording Secretary

Marc V. Johnson, Chairman