Ms. Moriarty welcomed members of the Board of Education and attendees to the first day of the 2018-2019 Budget Hearings. She invited the Superintendent of Schools and BOE to share how the upcoming year's budget was planned so that the Budget Committee could better understand the proposed changes over previous year.

SPEAKERS

BOE Budget Review Opening Comments – Dr. Gildea gave an overview of BOE’s proposed 2018-2019 Budget for Greenwich schools indicating that the $160 million budget would serve a projected enrollment of 9,066 students. She identified that the budget includes the $3.2 million of items to be transferred from the Town’s accounts to the BOE. The remaining $157.1 million operating budget can be broken down into 83% for personnel and professional services, 13% contractual items like tuition, transportation, utilities, and less than 3% on supplies and materials. She indicated that the BOE typically spends 99% of the annual budget and returns about 1% to the Town. The proposed budget being submitted is within 0.1% of BET FY19 Budget Guidelines. Dr. Gildea indicated that the budget was developed based on the BOE Strategic Plan, fiscal responsibility, estimated enrollment changes, student need, class size guidelines and staffing formulas, continuation of existing programs and services, and continued support for changed school start times.
Dr. Gildea presented data on academic achievement. Dr. Gildea indicated that, using the State’s Smarter Balance Assessment, Greenwich was comparable to similar school districts and 20 percentage points ahead of state education scores for both English/Language Arts (ELA) for grades 3-8. For math in grades 3-8, Greenwich students were 25 percentage points above published state scores and were in the top 90% of math students in the state. Similar trends were noted for the grade 11 assessments. Dr. Gildea noted that 84% of students meet or exceed expected growth. Dr. Gildea noted the continued high number of advanced placement tests taken at GHS (about 2,000) while maintaining high scores. When asked about comparative performance to private schools, Dr. Gildea responded that private schools do not release their performance data. She indicated that the District is moving towards competency based assessment systems and the continued focus on individual learning profiles.

Enrollment – Dr. Gildea indicated that enrollment is holding steady. The budget is based on an expected enrollment increase for FY19 of 8 students to 9,066 students, budget to budget. However, that forecast includes a reduction of 21 students in PreK, a reduction of 116 students in grades K-5 and an increase of 145 students in grades 6-12. The change in student mix has an impact on the staffing needs. In response to a question about PreK, Dr. Gildea responded that the thinking is that the 3 sections planned for the New Lebanon School will be moved from Parkway to New Lebanon. Currently 91-92% of the Town’s 3-year old’s are accessing some PreK. Dr. Gildea presented data on the enrollment trends for students with high needs, which is defined as students in the English Language Learner program, special education services or qualifying for the free or reduced lunch program. In 2017, 25.5% of the students were identified as high need, which was an increase from 24.9% in 2016. In response to a question about State reimbursement for special education, Dr. Gildea indicated the State guidelines is that they will reimburse districts for costs in excess of 4.5x of the average cost to educate a student in the district. However, the State has not been reimbursing Greenwich the full amount for which it qualifies. In response to a question about the Title 1 grant, Dr. Gildea clarified that it is intended to provide services in addition to those provided by the Town and that the funds cannot be used to supplant the standard District services.

BOE Operations Plan FY19 Budget – Ms. O’Donnell explained that the key drivers in the 2.62% increase in BOE’s budget include contractual salaries (61% of increase), higher transportation cost (12% of increase), out of district tuition for Special Education (11% of increase), technology infrastructure (7% of increase), and personalized learning expenses (6% of increase). In response to a question on the costs related to the changes in school start time, Ms. O’Donnell indicated it has cost the District an additional $1 million. In response to a question on Special Education out-of-tuition costs, Ms. Forde responded that about 30-50 students of about 1,000 special education students are placed out-of-district. Some of those students are new to the District who arrive with an IEP in place that mandates a specific out-of-district program. In these cases, the District does not have an option to show it can provide the necessary services in-house. Per Mr. Mynarski, for FY18, Greenwich qualifies for $796,282 of Excess Cost grant reimbursement from the State; however, the State pays in arrears and the amount might be reduced.

On the issue of staffing, Ms. O’Donnell presented the staffing changes incorporated into the proposed budget. The increase in secondary enrollment drives the need for an additional 8.9 FTE teachers. The reduction in elementary enrollment is spread out among the buildings and grades so that no reductions in staff can be budgeted. Additionally, a teacher of the visually impaired is needed. These increases are being partially offset by the elimination of 4.2 FTE positions in support services. The District is also including a new position for a Facilities Project
Manager to support the Capital Plan currently being considered at M/C grade 8. Including a few other changes and corrections, the staffing table indicates an increase of 11.3 FTE. It was noted that the numbers in the Staffing Schedule in the Town Budget Book does not match this data and Ms. O'Donnell was asked to adjust the discrepancy with Mr. Gieger. Ms. Fassuliotis questioned Ms. O'Donnell on the increased staffing and program efficiencies given the BET Guidelines. Ms. Moriarty indicated that the Guidelines state an assumption of flat enrollment. Ms. O'Donnell responded that the staffing budget reflects the District's needs based on enrollment, use of the same staffing formulas applied in prior years, and operations. Dr. Gildea responded that, as a part of her transition plan, she would be implementing an educational review of all programs with the goal to identify programs that work and programs that should be discontinued. Additionally, it was her intention in the coming year to review BOE Operations and processes for efficiency.

There were questions and discussion about the number of schools, efficiency efforts, teacher tenure requirements and numbers (650 tenured teachers out of 900 total), flexibility in staffing levels given changing enrollments up to the day school starts, preschool requirements, unmet need for preschool in Town, number and value of the grants received by the District, purchasing methods and any opportunities for purchasing efficiencies, increases in line items of temporary salaries and software.

In response to a question on the status of school construction projects, it was indicated that Glenville School has a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) and may have an additional State reimbursement of $231,000, which will be determined in the final audit (not yet scheduled). Hamilton Avenue School is operating with a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) and expects another $175,000 from State reimbursement. It was noted that the $140,000 left in the capital project account may not be enough to do the additional work required to get the CO. This project was impacted by protracted litigation and the staff is now focusing on getting the CO. MISA is operating with a TCO, but has filed the paperwork for its CO. Additional reimbursement from the State is expected to be at least $785,000. Hamilton Avenue School project was funded from the General Fund (pay as you go) so any additional reimbursement will go into the Capital and Non-Recurring Fund. This is not the same for Glenville and MISA projects, which were bonded.

School Lunch Fund -- The District has made progress to improve the financial status of this program. Mr. Hopkins reported $900 less in morning revenues at GHS due to late start times. They have now recaptured $300/400 in the morning and $600 at lunch at GHS. The National School Lunch Program pays for less than 50% of the cost to provide lunch to students who qualify for the Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program. FY18 operations are expected to generate $36,525, improving the negative fund balance to below $200,000. For FY19, the Town's contribution is budgeted at $240,000, down from $600,000 in FY18.

BOE Capital Plan FY19

Discussion on Fields -- Mr. Tesei and Mr. Siciliano joined the meeting for the discussion on fields. There was a discussion about the joint needs of Parks & Recreation and BOE for better fields and increased number of fields. Mr. Siciliano described that the Parks & Recreation shared responsibility for BOE playing fields. There was a discussion about open capital projects for planning new turf fields, the proposed FY19 capital project for a middle school field and re-carpet of GHS Field 6 and 7. There was a discussion about pros/cons of turf vs. grass fields, engineered grass fields, impact of lights on field availability, and neighbors. Malone and McBroome had prepared 3 middle school field layouts using funding in the current fiscal year. Due to required contaminant remediation, Western Middle School cannot be considered at this time. BET
members indicated that the BET needed more clarity on exactly what is the scope of the proposed capital project for a middle school field — what school, what deliverable. Regarding the proposed capital project for re-carpet of GHS Fields 6 and 7, it was conveyed that those fields are past their useful lives and that the project is needed to be approved to count on continued use. Mr. Siciliano stated that the Teufel Field at Byram Park does not have the size needed to accommodate the high school sports program. Also, the FY2018 Cardinal Stadium feasibility study was discussed.

BOE Master Facility Plan — Dr. Gildea identified that the BOE is continuing work on the Facility Master Plan. The District was presented with the enrollment projections in November 2017 which were prepared by KG+D, the Master Plan consultant. The review of the buildings and educational program needs are mostly completed. The consultant for the Master Plan presented the available information. Mr. Russ Davidson of KG+D identified the final plan has not yet been determined, but he will present the status of the long term plan under development. The report considered demographics, property values that were prepared by KG+D, status of existing facilities, and the needs for the next generation of education. He identified that the ages of the buildings are such that they require significant investment. Most of the buildings are worth fixing; some may not be worth saving. The enrollment forecast is calling for growth, especially at GHS, which will need more space to accommodate the students. When asked by Ms. Tarkington, Mr. Davidson said KG+D did not consider the impact on GHS enrollment of Greenwich Country Day School adding 3 additional high school grades; however, Dr. Gildea added that the class sizes are relatively small compared to GHS enrollment. The schools have learned to deal with enrollment swings by utilizing spaces that don't meet district standards. The goal is classrooms of 1,000 sf for K and 1st grade, and 850 sf for grades 2-5. Several buildings do not have ADA accessibility; others have make-shift accommodations which should be improved. The initial estimates before review and deliberation by the BOE would be a capital program that is $456 million over 15 years. This sum does not include site improvements features including paving and fields, and Havemeyer costs which he estimated at $246 million. However, this estimate will change with more analysis and with BOE input.

The Committee discussed the status of the open appropriations from prior years and the plan for completing the work, acknowledging that access to the buildings for many of the projects is limited to the summer months.

The Committee then reviewed each proposed capital project.

Digital Learning — Mr. Dunn explained that the District is in the third full year of implementation. The program started in FY14 in 2 schools. The District looks at efficiency (i.e., are the outputs completed in the same or less time) and effectiveness (i.e., changes in outcomes). He noted that digital learning was addressing gaps in learning and deepening understanding of subjects. When asked how economically disadvantaged students used the computers, he indicated that about 1.8% of students do not have wifi at home, so the District has a stipend program for the installation of "hot spots" at their homes.

Architectural and Engineering Funds — The Committee discussed the BOE request to increase this project by $200,000 from prior years. Ms. O'Donnell indicated this is to reflect the needs created by the adoption of the new Master Plan.

CMS Structure — The Committee discussed its request for more specifics on scope and costs as the information was preliminary.
Cardinal Field Study – Ms. O'Donnell indicated the BOE will vote on the plan to be adopted at its February 22nd meeting. This project is to request the planning funds. The BOE expects the project to be phased and will benefit from a public/private partnership for construction funding.

Ms. O'Donnell provided an update on the New Lebanon School construction project and the status of the Western Middle School remediation project.

There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 5:58 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Sidor, Recording Secretary

Leslie Moriarty, Chairman