

**BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION BUDGET COMMITTEE
DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW DAY BOE FOR FY17-18 BUDGET**

Town Hall Meeting Room
Wednesday, February 1, 2017

- Committee: James A. Lash, Chairman; Leslie Moriarty, Jeffrey S. Ramer, Leslie L. Tarkington
- Board: John Blankley, William Drake, Beth Krumeich, Michael Mason, Arthur Norton, Jill Oberlander, Tony Turner, Nancy Weissler
- Selectmen: John Toner, Selectman; Drew Marzullo, Selectman
- Staff: Peter Mynarski, Comptroller; Roland Gieger, Director of Budget; Angela Gencarelli, Financial Analyst; Ben Branyan Town Administrator
- BOE: Dr. Salvatore Corda, BOE Superintendent of Schools; Peter Sherr, Chair, BOE; Laura Erickson, BOE Member; Barbara O'Neill, BOE Member; Gaetane Frances, BOE Member; Jennifer Drayton, BOE Member; Irene Parisi, BOE Director of Curriculum & Professional Development; Jim Hricay, BOE Managing Director of Operations; Robert Stacy, BOE Human Resource Director; Mary Forde, BOE Director of Pupil Personnel Services; Ron Matten, BOE Director of Facilities; Phillip H. Dunn II, Chief Information; John Hopkins, Director of Food Services; Steve Walko, Chair, New Lebanon Building Committee
- RTM: Lucia Jansen, RTM D-7, BOC Chair; Roz Nicastro, D-3; Dan Ozizmir, D-5, Member BOC
- Public: Ken Borsuk, Report, *Greenwich Time*

Mr. Lash welcomed members of the Board of Education and attendees to the first day of the 2017-2018 Budget Hearings. He invited the Superintendent of Schools and BOE to share how the upcoming year's budget was planned so that the Budget Committee could understand the changes in today's students' curriculum and environment. He acknowledged that the budget fits the 2% Budget guidelines to reduce costs but asked for more information about BOE planning process.

SPEAKERS

BOE Budget Review Opening Comments – Dr. Corda began his presentation by noting the evolution of the style of education from teacher-driven classes to today's students, who come with different levels of knowledge and require a program-driven curriculum. Stating that while the school's budget wasn't technically planned to follow zero-based budgeting principles, he found that it was more productive to examine how each program was achieving what it was intended to do and plan for the support required to produce the achievement goal. Following the BOE's Five Year Strategic Plan, the Mission for the District and the Vision of the Graduate guided the expectations of developing scholars equipped to be productive interpersonally and exhibiting the habits to be successful. He noted that the spirit of the classroom was to cultivate problem-solving, recognize diversity, work with groups to understand team concepts and develop habits of mind that support persistence. The instructional goal was to encourage students to ask.

Beginning with an explanation of how the Strategic Plan aligned goals with teaching and the community, Dr. Corda noted how the teacher/student classroom dynamic was the mechanism where, under the teachers' leadership, problem-solving skills were developed as a foundation for the students' future.

In a further explanation of the structure, Dr. Corda noted that technology was changing the mindset of students and educators; it delivered a structure for curriculum, monitored student performance, assisted in emotional learning and supported educators' professional development. He commented further that the principal strategy was personalized learning with the teacher facilitating the process to provide choices of approach within boundaries; he described this technological advancement as providing pacing. Dr. Corda told the Budget Committee that the BOE's Budget was the financial plan to do the work in a people business.

Describing enrollment as relatively flat during the past five years, Dr. Corda indicated that staffing was dependent on the community value of neighborhood schools, BOE class size policy, the fluid nature of enrollment projected 8 months in advance of the opening day of a school year, and a planning challenge. He cited the previous year's elementary school projection of 841 students and its actual enrollment of 855 students who scattered among several schools, and in some cases required a new section to accommodate class size.

Dr. Corda commented that 35.5 FTE of teaching positions were grant-funded (and not included in the TOO); Mr. Shirr added that this funding was Federal Title One grants for economically disadvantaged youth, which should not be in jeopardy of being cancelled; consequently, no impact on teaching staff from grant reductions was anticipated in the BOE's budget. Federal funding also supported Special needs and bilingual education.

Next, Dr. Corda commented on measurement of student progress compared to other CT school districts on State tests. He noted that for students in grades 3-8 66% scored at acceptable levels in Math and 76% in English Language Arts (ELA). For high school students, 64% scored at acceptable levels in Math and 81% in ELA. These results are about the mean of comparable districts in the State (DRG B towns); the District believes they can be improved. Some of the challenges are that all students are tested regardless of when they arrive.

BOE Budget savings were achieved by reducing custodial floaters, tightening maintenance budgeting, a second RFP for school transportation that reduced costs and many teaching contract renewals at a lower base-rate for the coming year. New efficiencies and cost savings from the consolidation of BOE and TOG printing departments were also cited.

Mr. Lash asked about the return on investment of individualized learning given standard test results. Dr. Corda described the evolution of the 5-year digital learning program and said his goal was to efficiently assess performance to support learning. He predicted that fewer students would be in the lower quartile eventually, and that time, resources, and regular assessment would make the difference. Mr. Sherr concurred that the BOE was monitoring the spending/achievement ratio. Ms. Tarkington suggested that multiple agencies were requesting program support from the Budget Committee including Safe Rides, Violence Prevention Education and the Youth Coordinator being employed by the Social Services Department; she asked if the schools needed to take a bigger role in these areas. Ms. Forde responded that student emotional learning based on expanding social skills and experiences to build relationships was being tested as one method to counter risky behavior and build trust and comfort to support development. Robust and systematic engagement with parents/guardians to minimize language barriers, ethnic

expectations and employment demands, implementation of Customer Service standards and adaption of the website's redesign to mobile device usage, are some of the ways being pursued.

Digital Learning Environment Ms. Parisi spoke to how the curriculum was being aligned to State and national standards through shifts in instructional practice and professional development training. She noted that measurement in unit-based assessment of students was in place. She spoke about the State mandated instructional shift from 2013's emphasis on reading and writing, through 2014's Core Curriculum, to the current Smarter Balance using a digital operational assessment.

Mr. Dunn responded to the question of the marginal utility of money spent on digital learning. He suggested that benchmarking diagnostics indicated that there was 40% utilization and penetration. The research capability provided by digital learning was benchmarking students and teachers and enabling school comparisons to facilitate intervention.

Ms. Tarkington questioned the appropriateness of Digital Learning in the Capital Budget. Mr. Dunn explained that the hardware lease was a 3-year contract which would move the program to the Operations budget in FY20. She asked if measurements or benchmarking had been established for this program (now in its fifth year) and if the Town was to benchmark against other school systems, which would they be. Mr. Dunn stated that they might be in California or one town in Massachusetts. She asked if the BOE could come up with two measurement or benchmarking goals as conditions for Digital Learning.

Curriculum & Programs - Mr. Ramer asked if more students were being directed into Special Education programming because that area had increased its budget 9% over the previous year. Ms. Parisi responded that more students were being identified with a variety of disabilities so that additional supplemental resources were being implemented. In addressing a question about access for those students who do not have WiFi at home, Mr. Dunn indicated that WiFi hot spots are made available to qualifying families

Ms. Moriarty asked about whether Greenwich's pre-K children all have access to a quality program since educational gaps start before entering K. They responded that most but not all children have quality pre-K since the quality content of many pre-K programs was not measurable and cultural traditions influenced some parents. The United Way is looking at this issue as well.

When queried about new programs to be implemented in FY2017-2018, Dr. Corda responded that his goal was delivering a competency-based education with mastery of content knowledge that is demonstrated by showing increased student capacity and test performance.

Mr. Lash asked if programs like Summer School were meeting expectations and if the scope, cost and benefits were the best use of the funds. Mr. Sherr responded that the BOE was reviewing the need, size and performance before making any financial adjustments to the BOE's budget. Looking for additional information, Mr. Lash suggested that taxpayers might take the view that if improvement was not obvious, hard choices about funding might be required.

BOE Operations Plan and School Lunch Fund FY18 Budget – The Committee acknowledged that the BOE Budget was within its guidelines with no new net positions (after adjusting for 150 additional students), but asked how the BOE was planning to meet State educational cuts in the future. Dr. Corda responded that headcount in custodial staff and Central Office administrative staff were areas were reduced in this budget. Ms. Tarkington requested that the BOE come back with no new net positions as requested in the Budget Guidelines.

- Lunch Program – Mr. Hopkins advised the Committee that the program is getting closer to breakeven on an annual operating basis, but there are negative fund balances from prior years that are still being worked down. Increased sales of 3% and increased pricing might reduce the fund balance to zero in FY2017-2018.

Asked if there were no BET Budget Guidelines how it would affect Dr. Corda's planning, he suggested that he would make improvements to the schools' physical plants and increase Professional Development.

Emphasizing that planning for the future was necessary in anticipation of the arrival of a new, permanent Superintendent, Ms. Oberlander encouraged Dr. Corda to develop a strategy for the improvement of target populations and put its structure in place.

Not seeing promised benefits from the investment in Digital Learning to date, Ms. Weissler asked if there were "best practices" still to be incorporated. Dr. Corda responded that measuring increased utilization and monitoring metrics would be promoted. Mr. Lash requested that a new measurement tool be developed and instituted to provide the BET with an accountability metric for next year's Budget.

BOE Capital improvement Plan FY18 – Mr. Hricay reported that a contract had been awarded for the Master Plan project approved in FY17 Budget; it will survey the condition of the schools' facilities, review ed specifications, look at outdoor facilities, calculate capacity utilization using an updated demographic study, and create a long-term plan for the school facilities.

- Ms. Tarkington pointed out that consulting fees for BOE Capital Projects was up 30-35%.
- Cardinal Stadium – a feasibility study for an attractive, functional, ADA compliant stadium is anticipated to be a Public/Private Partnership. Mr. Sherr commented that the objective of the study was to have a tangible plan that would be used for planning purposes, including in discussions with prospective private partners. Ms. Tarkington commented that a condition of having a federal and state approved environmental remediation plan in place prior to proceeding and raising expectations should be a priority.
- Interiors and Finishes – Mr. Matten explained that schools and principals were engaged in the process of updating their buildings' interiors; cost-saving LED lighting, acoustical tiling and carpentry were among planned improvements. The comprehensive capital survey would focus more on the building envelope.
- Asbestos abatement might also be needed for the Interiors and Finishes work, however there was very little contingency money currently left in that fund. Additional asbestos abatement will take place when air conditioning units are installed at Central and Western Middle Schools under a dedicated budget line.
- Athletic Fields - Mr. Hricay and Mr. Matten provided the Committee with information about a Master Plan for the 15 schools' fields that would take into account their robust current use vs. changing needs. Lighting of fields is being considered based on the change of school start times that would allow use in November and March. Installation of all-weather turf is being considered so that playing fields can be used more quickly after inclement weather and because no penetration of the ground is required eliminating cost of soil

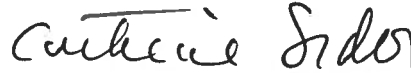
remediation. Partnering with TOG Risk Management and Parks & Recreation will take place as well as conversations with neighbors to discuss playing field lighting plans. Fencing and playground equipment replacement are itemized in the plan.

- Hamilton Avenue School Playground – Ms. Erickson spoke in advance of a request for an interim appropriation for the improvement of the school's playing field to be presented to the Budget Committee at its next regular meeting. The project's cost is not reflected in the FY18 Capital Improvement Budget because the BOE wanted to begin the project prior to the start of FY18. Some of the expenditures will be offset by remaining funds in the School Construction project.
- The Capital Budget doesn't include funding for remediation of soil at Western Middle School since the scope and timing of approval of the federal and state required environmental remediation plan is not yet known.

Dr. Corda pointed to the progress in achievement, health, level of attendance and efficiency and effectiveness of programs as measures of Greenwich Schools' performance.

Mr. Lash expressed his thanks to the BOE for their presentation and to the Committee for its dedication to the Budget Hearing process. There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 4:48 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Catherine Sidor, Recording Secretary



James A. Lash, Chairman