

TOWN OF GREENWICH
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION BUDGET COMMITTEE
2006-07 DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET REVIEWS
MINUTES
Cone Room
Tuesday, February 7, 2006

Present:

Committee: Stephen Walko, Chairman
Edward Krumeich, Michael Mason, Larry Simon

Staff: Peter Mynarski, Comptroller; Roland Gieger, Budget Director; Ed Gomeau, Town Administrator; Dr. Larry Leveret, Dr. Susan Wallerstein, Colleen Giambo, John Curtin, Leslie Moriarty, Richard Calcavecchio, Board of Education; Diane Fox, Ray Heinbusch, Donald Heller, Land Use

Board: Nancy Barton, James Himes, Alma Rutgers, Arthur Norton, Robert Stone, Leslie Tarkington, Peter Tesei

Board Ex Officio: James A. Lash, First Selectman

Mr. Walko called the meeting to order at 1:10 P.M.

The Committee took some time to discuss general budget issues.

Board of Education:

Mr. Simon pointed out that one of the most important things the BOE is doing is the knowledge based learning. He wanted a sense of how this was going.

Dr. Leverett said the knowledge and skill based compensation plan is one of the elements in the approved labor agreement with the Greenwich Education Association. The committee has had a number of meetings, and an external facilitator has been engaged from Thought Bridge, a Cambridge based consultant firm specializing in conflict resolution and mediation, and interest based bargaining strategies.

The representatives from the school board are Leslie Moriarty and Bill Kelly. The administration representatives are Mary Capwell, Deputy Superintendent, Dr. Ellen Flanagan, HR Director and John Grasso, Principal of Riverside Middle School. The GEA is represented by Kathy Delahanty, current President, Lil Perrone, past President and two other members of the teaching staff, one from the high school and one from the elementary school.

A training/organization session is planned, and there have also been interviews with the consultant, sharing perspectives on the board's interest in knowledge based compensation.

The negotiations are only beginning, and a report is expected in November 2006.

Should the negotiations result in an agreement to move forward with an alternative approach to compensation, the traditional salary structure (step based) will be maintained as well as a parallel guide based on knowledge and skills.

Mr. Simon asked if there was any interest and discussion with other school districts regarding their interest in knowledge and skill based learning. Dr. Leverett stated that the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) recently featured the Greenwich contract and an article in their newsletter.

Mr. Simon asked for clarification of closing the achievement gap. Mr. Curtin explained that consistently over the last five years approximately 80% of Greenwich students are performing at the state standard. Ten years prior to that, there was an increase from in the average of 60% to that 80%, showing improvement. Currently, the other 20% of students are not making progress toward the state standard. This 20% is disproportionately African American, Latino, students that qualify for free or reduced lunch, or those enrolled in special education programs.

Those students achieving at grade level or higher have increased SAT scores at the high school, and participation in the advanced placement program has doubled. Gaps in achievement refer to that 20%.

A number of different strategies are in place to improve efforts towards making progress with these students and reducing the percentage to lower than 20%. Targets have been set over the next five years, and actions are being taken. One strategy is close and careful monitoring of students.

Mr. Walko asked how, if at all, the magnet programs focus on closing the achievement gaps.

Dr. Leverett said there is insufficient data at this time to answer that question.

The International School at Dundee (ISD) was created as a magnet and there was a variety of issues that its creation attempted to address. The goals are to avoid re-districting and decrease percentages of total minority populations at particular schools. The diversity in population at ISD mirrors the district. Another purpose of the magnet school is to pilot ideas and adopt them into the larger school programs, one example being the elementary foreign language program.

Julian Curtis has been successful in terms of racial balance and socio-economic distribution as a magnet school. Hamilton Avenue has not been as successful.

In response to a question from Mr. Mason, Mr. Calcavecchio said some areas of the budget that were not particularly descriptive were condensed. This makes for some bad period to period comparatives in the short term. Both Mr. Mason and Mr. Krumeich were concerned that the information provided focused more on procedure and less on cost and reason for cost.

An effort has been made to make the budget more descriptive and a better informative source.

Mr. Simon asked that since information from other schools is being submitted, will more districts do a better job. Mr. Curtin said that this type of analysis has not been done before. It is a new process and there is not sufficient information as yet. It is hoped that it will yield positive results.

Mr. Walko asked how many other districts offered sponsorships. Mr. Curtin responded that every district should. The provisions in the sponsorship agreements are written in accordance with Connecticut general Statutes. There are a variety of different living arrangements in town. One option is to have a resident non-relative or a resident relative that is not a legal guardian take a child in. Or, if a child is coming to live with a brother or sister, proof must be made that the child is residing with them. At least half of the recent withdrawals from the program have been

because a child's living arrangement had changed and they now live out of town. Sponsorships are reviewed annually.

Mr. Walko expressed that the BOE was ahead of the curve with respect to software for building maintenance and hoped that this could be consolidated with town software at some future point.

In response to a question from Mr. Walko about decreased enrollment, Ms. Giambo said that enrollment numbers are on a downward trend. The BOE will analyze and evaluate the utilization of their current buildings to determine their best use in order to minimize expenses as the enrollment continues to decline. Dr. Wallerstein added that multiple agendas are at a convergence. It was anticipated that facility utilization would not dip below 80% utilization level until 2009-10. Planning for that eventuality began. Planning for core administrative space at Havemeyer was also being investigated, and a space needs study was done. More disciplined educational specifications for three functions that are currently in rental space are in the process of being defined. The goal is lowering or eliminating operating costs such as utilities, phone, etc. This kind of information should be available over the next four to six weeks.

Asked if any decisions were made based on declining enrollment, Dr. Wallerstein and Ms. Giambo stated that at this point, no. Rental of space at Prospect Street is not included in the 2006-07 budget.

Land Use:

Ms. Fox began her presentation by addressing the KPMG report. Subsequent to that report, the 3 land use agencies accomplished every recommendation except one, including the hiring of an applications coordinator and a consolidated Administrative Budget Code (174).

Permit tracking software is integrated databases of Planning and Zoning and Wetlands.

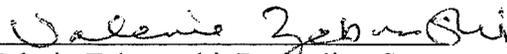
GIS equipment actively used when processing applications.

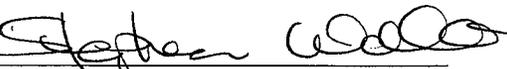
Consultant Funds: Planning and Zoning requested \$120,000 for hiring a consultant to perform the studies necessary to update the Plan for Conservation and Development (PCD). The goal is to hire an overall consultant to oversee the operation of the PCD update, and then on an as needed basis to do other traffic or housing studies. The consultant will also work with staff to form a steering committee that will be representative of the Greenwich community

Cross training of one of the new building inspectors will be done to help with zoning inspections.

The meeting adjourned at 3:32 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,


Valerie Zebrowski, Recording Secretary


Stephen Walko, Chairman