

**TOWN OF GREENWICH  
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION  
BUDGET COMMITTEE  
BOE – OPERATIONAL AND CAPITAL BUDGET REVIEW FY13 BUDGET  
MINUTES  
Town Hall Meeting Room – 9:00 A.M.  
Thursday, February 9, 2012**

Present:

Committee: Joseph Pellegrino, Chairman; William Finger, Jeff Ramer,  
Leslie L. Tarkington

Staff: Peter Mynarski, Comptroller, Roland Gieger, Budget Director; Dr. Roger Lulow, BOE Interim Superintendent, Ben Branyan, Managing Director of Operations, Robert Lichtenfeld, Director of Human Resources, Regina Williams, BOE, Assistant Director of Human Resources, Mary Forde, BOE Director of Pupil Personnel Services; Kim Eves, BOE Director of Communications; John Curtin, Special Projects Manager, Stacey Gross, Assistant Superintendent – Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Learning (CIPL), Ralph Mayo, Middle School Principal, Shelly Somers, Middle School Principal, Terri Staff-Klein, Middle School Principal, Susan Chipouras, Director of Facilities

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

Others: Leslie Moriarty, Chairman, Board of Education; Pete Von Braun, Board of Education, Barbara O'Neill, BOE, Steve Anderson, BOE

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 FY2012 - 2013 Operating and Capital Budget Review. Mr. Pellegrino offered his opening remarks and mentioned the Board of Education was in the process of searching for a new Superintendent and the Board of Estimate and Taxation had five new members. Mr. Pellegrino remarked that during this process he would be concentrating on the Board of Education's goals and objectives, their vision, how much their initiatives costs the taxpayers and what was the return on our investment. In addition, Mr. Pellegrino stated that there would be a unique look at the everyday operations of the three middle schools.

Ms. Moriarty started the presentation by introducing a number of key Board of Education employees and officials in attendance.

Dr. Lulow continued by proceeding through a well-structured power point presentation. The presentation went as follows:

- Federal, State, Local, BOE, District, School – Dr Lulow pointed out there are approximately 15,000 school districts in the United States. He stressed that the Greenwich School System is governed by mandates from various federal, state and local oversight authorities. For example, Dr. Lulow cited Federal mandates such as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act. Dr. Lulow also

pointed out that the State of Connecticut is influential in areas such as: length of school year, teacher certifications and tenure, collective bargaining, transportation of public and private school students and teacher evaluations.

Dr. Lulow informed the Committee that the school district is also influenced by local authorities such as: the Board of Education, the BET and various Town functions.

- Governance Structure of BOE (roles & responsibilities) – Dr. Lulow stated that he reports to the Board of Education whose key responsibilities are: hiring and evaluating the Superintendent, development of school district policies that govern students and employees, adoption of curricula and textbooks, approval of the annual school budget, responsibility for all property used by the district and insuring that all Federal and State educational mandates are implemented and adhered to.
- Mission, Vision of Graduate (E-000) - Dr. Lulow informed the Committee of the mission of the Greenwich Public Schools and the vision of the graduate.
- District Success System – Dr. Lulow and Ms. Moriarty explained in detail the Board of Education Success System which includes measures that are aligned with the District Mission and Vision, sets improvement targets across six (6) areas of system performance including student achievement and tracks system performance relative to similar districts and progress towards targets. In addition, the Harris Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey was reviewed and discussed at length. It was mentioned that the survey detailed in the presentation was about 2 years old and an updated survey would come out this spring 2012.

Dr. Lulow detailed a number of successes and challenges in the presentation. The successes offered were various test score improvements measured against District Reference Group (DRG) A and B Districts. The challenge areas dealt with areas such as; writing, science, primary grades (K-2), achievement gap, enrollments of less than 3 years in district and the 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade transitions.

Dr. Lulow offered to break for questions. Mr. Pellegrino began by asking for a more detailed explanation of the figures listed in the power point presentation slide with the Harris Survey results. Dr. Curtin explained the slide in further detail. Mr. Finger followed up with a question about the rate of responses to the survey. Ms. Eves answered that the response rate for parents was about 30%, the response rate for teachers and staff was about 75 to 85% and the student response rate was about 80 to 90%.

Dr. Lulow, in response to the apparent negative satisfaction measurements depicted by the survey, stated that over the last nine years the leadership of the District was traumatic and lacking. Dr. Lulow added that these results are what was felt and reflected two years ago and hopefully the results will be much better when released this spring. Ms. Moriarty also pointed out that the survey was taken during a period of dissatisfaction headlined with mold issues at the Western Middle School modular and a change in superintendents. Mr. Finger stated that he felt that student achievement is more important than stakeholder satisfaction and offered his opinion based on having two children go through the Greenwich School System. Mr. Finger wanted to clarify that stakeholder satisfaction is important but what is perceived and measured is the results of student achievements. Mr. Pellegrino added that he felt that both are equally important.

During the presentation, Dr. Lulow anecdotally offered the success of the North Mianus 5<sup>th</sup> grade science team, scoring second in the State of Connecticut on a science project they had worked on. Mr. Finger, following up on Dr. Lulow's reference to the success of this unit asked why it is working in North Mianus and not someplace else. Dr. Lulow answered that in North Mianus, this group used the "Data Team Approach" at a more advanced level setting science as a major goal for success.

Ms. Tarkington asked a question in the area of challenges and asked if the 6<sup>th</sup> grade should be moved back into the elementary schools. Dr. Lulow firmly answered no and stated that this issue had been addressed over the last twenty five years with no desire to revert to the previous arrangement. He added the current style works.

Mr. Pellegrino asked, if there are over 15,000 school districts in the country, how big is Greenwich relative to this group and where does Greenwich fit relative to similar districts for purposes of benchmarking. Dr. Lulow stated it is hard to answer that question. For example, he stated Florida has 80 districts and Ohio has 612 districts, but in Florida they are countywide districts. Dr. Lulow stated Greenwich is large relative to communities in the State of Connecticut. Dr. Lulow offered, in his experiences, a typical district would consist of one high school, one middle school and two or three elementary schools. Mr. Pellegrino asked if we should compare Greenwich to communities like Palo Alto, California and Austin, Texas. Ms. Moriarty answered by saying the standard for comparisons should be standardized tests scores measured against other Connecticut towns and we should be concentrating on looking at improving what we deliver. Mr. Finger stated that a large percentage of Greenwich students attend private schools and that would complicate benchmarking.

Ms. Tarkington inquired as to which are the top three or five school districts in the United States. Dr. Lulow answered by saying it is hard to determine who the best is. He added that the people in the community determine what is best for their respective communities.

Mr. Pellegrino asked how much do federal and state mandates cost the Town. Dr. Lulow answered he didn't have that number available.

Mr. Finger asked if teacher evaluations are mandated by the State of Connecticut. Dr. Lulow answered the evaluations are designed locally with certain requirements coming from the State. Mr. Finger asked about the evaluation process and Dr. Lulow explained how the process works.

- Delivery Model for Mission, Vision of Graduate – Dr. Lulow gave a quick walk through of the District Organizational Chart. Dr. Lulow proceeded to explain a series of charts included in the presentation such as;
  - Elementary Attendance Areas
  - Actual and Projected Enrollment
  - Elementary Facility Utilization
  - Percentage of Minority Enrollment by Race
  - Percentage Students Qualifying For Free or Reduced Price Lunch
  - English Non-Dominant Students and English Language Learners
  - Percentage Students Receiving Special Education Services

- Students Assessed on Connecticut Mastery Test

Dr. Lulow presented and discussed two slides that detail mandated programs and those programs that exceed mandates.

At this point, Mr. Branyan and Dr. Lulow presented the district staffing table of organization presented on a 2011-12 budget, 2011-2012 actual and 2012-2013 budget basis. They explained the variances from year to year. In addition, they detailed the characteristics of the teaching faculty which shows a break down by education level and also a chart showing teacher years of service in the Greenwich system. Mr. Branyan and Dr. Lulow expanded the discussions by discussing GOSA staffing variances, staffing modes for teachers, administration and other staffing categories, labor contracts, evaluations (Teacher Evaluation, Professional Development Plans) and teacher's support.

Dr. Lulow offered to break for questions. Mr. Pellegrino started by referring Dr. Lulow back to slide number 19, Elementary Facility Utilization. Mr. Pellegrino asked at what point do you start discussing the closing of a school in light of future underutilization. Dr. Lulow responded by saying that when projected optimal utilization levels fall below 80% you start to hold discussions. He added that the school most in danger of approaching that level is Parkway School. However, Dr. Lulow cautioned the Committee that there are a large number of vacant backcountry residences for sale in Greenwich due to the economic and housing downturn in recent years. His concerns centered on a "what if" scenario if people start occupying these residences and student enrollments in Parkway School don't reach the projected levels in the chart and we've closed a school. Mr. Lulow also strongly cautioned that discussion on closing Parkway School could be a public relations or media negative. In addition, Dr. Lulow stated that closing Parkway School could cause an extremely disruptive restructuring by redeploying these affected students from Parkway into other adjacent schools that could also have a rippling effect. Mr. Pellegrino informed Dr. Lulow that there was no mention of closing Parkway School by either him or the other Committee members and his charts are merely showing a trend that requires addressing.

Mr. Pellegrino called attention to an "Elementary Building Utilization" chart showing Parkway School going from 64.9% utilization in 2011-2012 to potentially 45.2% in 2015-2016. Referencing this chart, Mr. Pellegrino asked what the savings would be if you closed Parkway School and channeled the students to other school locations. Mr. Branyan offered that the calculated cost is about \$1.3 million. However, Dr. Lulow cautioned that increased transportation costs have to be taken into account. Mr. Finger followed with a question about declining enrollment at Parkway. He asked at which point does it reach, whereas, children aren't getting sufficient attention. Dr. Lulow answered that the Board of Education is already looking at the Parkway enrollment situation. Mr. Pellegrino concluded the Parkway discussion by stating that this is a future topic for discussion on how we build budgets.

Mr. Finger asked about the Advanced Learning Program and what qualifies students into the program. Ms. Gross gave the Committee a detailed description of the program and the process.

The questioning turned to slides 30 to 32, which dealt with the staffing table of organization, characteristics of teaching faculty (e.g. education levels) and teacher's years of service. Mr. Pellegrino questioned the statistics in the staffing table of organization, specifically the GEA-Evolve headcount. Dr. Lulow started by stating that a number of variances could be attributed to the Greenwich High School restructuring last spring that affected budget to actual numbers. An extended discussion ensued about trying to understand education levels and teacher's years of service. Dr. Lulow, in response to Mr. Pellegrino, explained that the teachers listed on the charts

without higher teaching degrees are simply just starting out and are new to the system. He added, mandates require teachers to ultimately attain higher degrees.

Dr. Lulow attempted to further explain the chart showing teacher's years of service. Dr. Lulow stated he was startled to learn how the teacher staffing in Greenwich contained an uncharacteristically younger staff, He further added that the school system loses about 40 to 45 teachers each year; two thirds to retirement and one third are processed out. Dr. Lulow stressed to the Committee not to misinterpret the data presented in the teacher's years of service chart and jump to conclusions. Mr. Ramer quickly countered that he strongly feels the chart presents certain conclusions. Mr. Ramer stated he didn't like the findings from the chart that indicate that teachers are not being adequately retained. Mr. Pellegrino pointed out that the chart should be views as a cumulative distribution from left to right, and that perspective would address Mr. Ramer's observation. A discussion followed on the variances of how tenure works. The Committee members questioned whether the teacher evaluation system is working and whether or not we are getting an adequate applicant pool. Dr. Lulow offered that a high turnover rate can either indicate a poor selection process or a tough evaluation system.

Mr. Finger asked about the Board of Education's role in the labor contracts process. Dr. Lulow and Ms. Moriarty stated that the Board of Education negotiates contracts with teachers and administrators, but does not get involved in the other employee groups such as: LIUNA, Teamsters, GMEA and AFSCME.

- Budget – Dr. Lulow offered to the Committee that the budgetary portion of their presentation had been covered earlier in the week and Mr. Branyan would proceed quickly through the slides, unless the Committee had questions.

Mr. Branyan pointed out the 2012-2013 Operating Budget request was \$139,807,220 which represents a 2.56% increase over the previous year. Mr. Branyan further explained the breakdown of the 2.56% increase by major object code. Mr. Branyan stated that the fixed costs/utilities budget increased only by 0.05% budget to budget. He added that the transportation contract ends this year and a new contract was reached with a zero percentage increase in the first year. Mr. Pellegrino asked about safety training for bus drivers and if the Town is required legally to provide transportation to students. Mr. Branyan and Dr. Lulow answered that extensive safety training it required and provided to bus drivers. Also, the Town is not required to provide bus transportation to students per State mandate. However, Dr. Lulow pointed out that the school district is required by State Law to provide bus transportation to private school students who live in Town if it provides bus transportation to public school students. Mr. Pellegrino asked how much the transportation contract was and Mr. Branyan answered \$4.5 million.

Dr. Lulow described the per pupil allocation, by school, to the Committee members.

At this point, Ms. Gross was invited to the table and a lengthy discussion was held on district programs. The Committee had a number of questions regarding program coordinators, district programs and pupil personnel services. Dr. Lulow was asked as to why the school district has so many administrators. Dr. Lulow broke his answer into four segments:

- There was a commitment to have a Principal and Assistant Principal in every Elementary School.
- There was a commitment to build one high school instead of two, and break it into individual houses requiring additional administrators.

- The School District wanted a much higher teacher to student ratio in Special Education.
- There was a decision to have Program Coordinators manage curricula.

Dr. Lulow was asked if he felt that it was necessary to have an Assistant Principal in every Elementary School. He answered that in his experiences he didn't see it.

There was a final slide showing that the Town of Greenwich provided in-kind services or fringe benefits totaling \$31,793,145. Mr. Pellegrino asked if those figures were in the per pupil costs. Mr. Branyan answered that they were.

There was a break and the next session dealt with a presentation from the three Middle School Principals. Mr. Ralph Mayo, Ms. Shelley Somers and Ms. Terry Starr-Klein presented to the Committee their roles as Instructional Leaders, Operations Managers and Community Collaborators.

The principals methodically went through a series of anecdotal and real situations they are confronted with on a daily basis generating a lengthy discussion with a variety of questions.

After the conclusion of the middle school principal presentations, Mr. Branyan held a short discussion on the finances of the Public School Lunch Fund and announced that the negative fund balance situation has been rectified.

The Board of Education presentation now proceeded into a review of Board of Education Capital Projects, and Ms Chipouras joined Mr. Branyan and Dr. Lulow. Mr. Branyan stated that the total Capital Project request for fiscal year 2012-2013 was \$22,452,900.

Mr. Pellegrino proceeded to go through each BOE Capital Project request as follows:

Technology - \$658,700 – The Committee discussed the technology request and Mr. Pellegrino asked if the Information Technology (IT) Departments for the Town and Board of Education work together in collaboration. Mr. Branyan answered that the two IT Departments do talk and there is some collaboration. Mr. Pellegrino questioned the request for the district phone system and referenced the work done by the previous BET Audit Committee in this area. Ms. Chipouras responded and justified the request for the Committee members. Mr. Pellegrino asked how the 311 system played out for the school district. Ms. Chipouras offered no comment indicating they were totally unaware of the Town's efforts in this area.

Interiors - \$147,000 – This is a request for district wide school furniture replacement and to replace shades and blinds at the International School of Dundee. Mr. Pellegrino questioned whether Board of Education officials could find saving throughout their current request and replace the seats in the Central Middle School (CMS).

Building Envelope & Structure – Abatement - \$315,000 – The Committee asked what this item was. Ms. Chipouras responded it was simply district wide asbestos abatement and repair consistent with the current District Asbestos Management Plan.

Consultant Fees for Next FY Capital Projects - \$500,000 – This is a normal reoccurring request to start school construction projects when school ends. The funds are needed to have construction documents prepared and bidding completed prior to the availability of the remaining capital projects funding each year.

Interiors – Bathroom Renovations - \$578,800 – This request is for renovations of existing bathrooms at Old Greenwich and Riverside Schools.

Interiors – Finishes - \$622,800 – The Committee asked what this request was for. Ms. Chipouras responded by stating that it is to meet the painting needs of the district. When asked how many painters the school district has, Ms. Chipouras responded that there are two full time painters at the high school. The remaining schools utilize custodians to do the painting, mainly during school breaks.

Interiors – Carpentry - \$547,300 – This is a request for carpentry work, mainly at Western Middle School with some hardware replacement district wide.

Building Envelope & Structure – Life Cycle Replacements – \$1,455,100 – This request is for the replacement of exterior doors and windows at Western Middle and Old Greenwich Schools.

Mechanical System Upgrades - \$3,157,400 – This request is for work on mechanical systems including heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems at a variety of schools.

Building Envelope & Structure – Capital Maintenance – \$173,400 – This request is for code upgrades at Central Middle School and Havemeyer.

MEP & Utilities – Electrical System Upgrades – \$789,300 – This request is for existing electrical systems including fire alarms, egress lighting, lighting, security systems and electrical distribution systems at Central and Western Middle Schools. There is a component for security work district wide which prompted an extended discussion of the existing security at the high school and the need to extend it to the middle schools.

Specialty Space – GHS Music Instructional Space and Auditorium (MISA) - \$12,215,000 – This is the second phase of the funding for the MISA project. The first phase was funded for \$17 million last year. When asked if additional security cameras to link into the GHS system were included, Ms. Chipouras answered yes. There was a discussion about the \$400,000 added to the cost of the project anticipating the cost of phasing. Also, \$800,000 which had been budgeted to be appropriated in FY'13/'14 was moved forward. Ms. Chipouras and Ms. Moriarty informed the Committee that school construction reimbursements had not been authorized by the State of Connecticut yet. These reimbursements are for the construction phase only and do not include the cost of the parking lots and drainage improvements which were previously appropriated. Ms. Chipouras added that the reimbursements are contingent on the full authorization of the project and no conditions being placed on the project.

Specialty Space – MISA – Soil Contamination - \$2,070,000 – This request is made up of two parts. Part 1 is to return \$1,470,000 of the MISA contingency that was used to assess and address the soil contamination last summer and currently. Part 2 is for an additional \$600,000 to address the additional cost of the removal of contaminated soil within the MISA footprint.


Specialty Space – Technology Education – \$300,000 – This request is for renovation of the Technical Education spaces including the Transportation and Construction Shop areas. This request supplements an additional amount included in the MISA Construction budget.

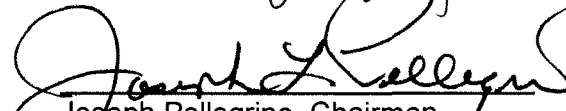
Exterior Projects – \$50,000 is the remainder for miscellaneous courtyard repairs.

The meeting adjourned for a lunch break at 12:42 P.M. and reconvened at 1:11 P.M.

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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Peter Mynarski, Recording Secretary

  
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Joseph Pellegrino, Chairman