

**TOWN OF GREENWICH
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION
BUDGET COMMITTEE
BOE – OPERATIONAL AND CAPITAL BUDGET REVIEW – FY11 BUDGET
MINUTES
Cone Room, 2nd Floor – 10:00 A.M.
Thursday, February 11, 2010**

Present:

Committee: Michael S. Mason, Chairman; William Finger, Leslie L. Tarkington
Laurence B. Simon

Staff: Peter Mynarski, Comptroller; Roland Gieger, Budget Director; Dr.
Sidney Freund, BOE Superintendent; Ellen Flanagan, BOE Deputy
Superintendent; Regina Williams, BOE, Assistant Director of Human
Resources; Jane Anderson, Interim Director of Human Resources;
Richard Calcavecchio, BOE Director of Budgets;; Mary Forde, BOE
Director of Pupil Personnel Services; Kim Eves, BOE Director of
Communications; John Curtin, Special Projects Manager

Board: Steve Walko, Nancy Barton, Randall Huffman, Art Norton,
Jeff Ramer

Others: Steve Anderson, Chairman, Board of Education; Leslie Moriarty, Vice-
Chairman, Board of Education, Robert Brady, RTM; Genny Krob, RTM

Mr. Mason called the meeting to order at 10:10 A.M. He welcomed everyone to the BET Budget Committee meeting on the Board of Education FY11 Operating and Capital Budget review.

SPEAKERS

Board of Education officials gave a presentation to the BET Budget Committee with opening remarks from Mr. Steven Anderson. Mr. Anderson, Dr. Freund and other education officials answered a series of questions from the BET Budget Committee and other BET members in attendance. The substance of the questions and the responses are as follows:

- The long-range plan for pre-kindergarten students was discussed with BOE officials stressing that the program is driven by special needs students and the ratio of two special need students for every five students.
- The relationship between magnet and neighborhood schools was discussed. BOE officials stated that all schools are neighborhood schools first and foremost. Regarding magnet schools, there is a lottery system. In addition, magnet schools are open to the children of Town employees, paying tuition at a 25% rate and certified staff paying at a rate of 5% rate. BOE officials offered that magnet schools are

instrumental in balancing enrollment and racial imbalances. However, two schools remain unbalanced and additional steps might be required.

- BOE officials discussed the successes and failures of the magnet program noting the enrollment breakdown of 291 students attracted from outside their neighborhood catchment areas: Hamilton Avenue School = 66 students, International School of Dundee = 158, Julian Curtiss = 64 and New Lebanon = 3. These 291 students represent 7.1% of all elementary school students (4,116).
- BOE officials talked about the physical education program, noting that the swimming program at Hamilton Avenue School was replaced with a Science Laboratory with no additional cost.
- When asked to describe his cabinet and their incentives for working, Dr. Freund stressed that professional pride takes over and that he had removed the \$9,800 previously budgeted for this item.
- BOE officials gave an extended description of the usage of outside law firms. Mr. Anderson noted that there are four areas whereas legal assistance is needed; expulsion hearings, transportation issues, contractual negotiations and special education. BOE officials stressed that in addition to outside legal assistance, the BOE utilizes existing Town Law Department staff. Mr. Anderson emphasized the importance of using counsel specially trained in certain areas of the law when attending hearings and negotiations regarding special education situations.
- BOE officials were asked to comment on the concept of leasing laptop computers. BOE officials stressed that the laptops were leased because they are part of the Town's overall strategy to refresh technology on a regular basis and eliminate the disposal problem.
- Dr. Freund offered that the BOE website included a 200 page information technology plan.
- BOE officials were asked to describe EVOLVE PLUS. BOE officials stated EVOLVE is the product of the University of Vermont that substitutes special education teachers for paraprofessionals. The BOE was using a ratio of 1:3 in the past but will be using a 1:4 ratio going forward.
- BOE officials gave the BET Budget Committee an update on the residency program, stating it is a 2 year old initiative and needs one more year to be fully evaluated. 44 cases were investigated and 20 expulsions resulted.
- BOE officials informed the Committee, when asked about the SRO police officer, that the costs are budgeted in the Police Department.
- BOE officials were asked to describe the Table of Organization, non-certified position changes in the past 5 years. Ms. Regina Williams directed BET Committee members to the respective BOE and Town budget books in response to their questions. The Committee asked that these two documents be reconciled specifically with the number of paraprofessionals added back (24) and the number of certified teachers reduced (0).
- There were a number of discussions regarding the Eastern Middle School fitness center. In defense of constructing the EMS fitness center, BOE officials claim that they took advantage of constructing the fitness center in conjunction with the major repairs of the adjacent gymnasium.
- When asked to discuss the reduction of utility account costs, BOE officials stated that the \$285,000 savings from natural gas costs were reallocated to two other areas

in the budget (additional Smart Boards (\$100,000) and IB training (\$135,000)) and \$50,000 was used to reduce the budget request.

- BOE officials stated that the reduced Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant monies diverted from the General Fund, this year, would be returned to fund balance as an unspent appropriation.
- Mr. Simon directed three questions to Dr. Freund centering on the following areas:
 - One year from now, sitting in this same room, how would you tell the committee how you are doing relative to the budget submitted today? Dr. Freund stressed that achieving goals and objectives, in his opinion and experiences, are not achieved in one year. His goal and the goals of the Board of Education are to incrementally achieve their goals over a period of years. Mr. Simon asked that the BOE work on a more specific answer.
 - There are perceived concerns from the public regarding special education at the High School. Does this budget address those concerns? Dr. Freund conceded there are communication problems that are being addressed and he has confidence that most issues will be resolved. Dr. Freund stressed that there will always be special education concerns due to the complexity of those issues.
 - Talented and Gifted Students and the question of Advanced Learning Program (ALP). Should the BOE continue to support pullout education rather than teaching differentiated education within the classroom? Dr. Freund indicated that ALP will be studied over the next semester and the Budget Committee should have a fuller discussion next year in the context of the FY12 budget.
- Mr. Mason returned to the question of the accuracy of the table of organization and again, Ms. Regina Williams resorted to referencing the BOE and Town budget books. This issue remains unresolved.

The meeting adjourned for a lunch break at 12:31 P.M. and reconvened at 1:03 P.M.

Mr. Anderson and Dr. Freund briefly discussed the current status of school capital projects, both ongoing projects and those being requested in the FY11 budget. They stressed that the maintenance of existing assets remains a top priority and that they use a software package to monitor preventive maintenance. BOE officials stressed that the Music Instructional Space Auditorium (MISA) is still the top priority after the annual requests for maintenance funding.

When asked by Mr. Simon to assess the conditions of the schools, Dr. Freund responded that they are not in the conditions that he expected for a community such as the Town of Greenwich. Dr. Freund further criticized the funding model stating it didn't serve the schools well.

Ms. Tarkington asked about the design and funding for the North Street School parking lot and circulation plan adjacent to the newly constructed Animal Shelter and Maintenance Facility. There is confusion and lack of communication between the BOE and DPW over which entity is responsible for the project design and implementation of the reconfigured design and access to the parking lot. Mr. Simon requested that Dr. Freund submit a cost

estimate of the additional costs and the BET Budget Committee would address this project next week when they meet with the DPW for their discussion of capital projects.

The Committee turned its attention back to questions submitted by various BET members and BOE officials addressed issues dealing with asbestos abatement, fitness centers, Architectural and Engineering (A&E) funding for FY12 projects, security systems, data cabling and modular removal.

Mr. Finger asked BOE officials to comment on the need for Assistant Principals, in addition to Principals. BOE officials responded accordingly, demonstrating the need for both positions highlighting the fact that assistant principals usually devote a portion of their time instructing students in addition to their day-to-day activities.

Mr. Mason asked BOE officials on how they would respond to the RTM resolution that recently failed regarding zero percent budget increases and the cutting back of staff in light of continuing negative economic conditions. Mr. Anderson referenced returning to the results of the RISE study done three years ago. Mr. Anderson advised that the closing of a school was strenuously examined and determined not cost effective, at least for the near future. Mr. Anderson also stated that the findings of the RISE study needed to be updated with two years remaining on its findings.

Ms. Tarkington asked about reducing the high school back to three years, moving ninth grade back to the middle schools, and the sixth grade back to the elementary schools. Both Dr. Freund and Mr. Anderson responded that it had been looked at and it would provide major programmatic problems.

Ms. Barton and Mr. Huffman both brought the concept of turning to twenty year borrowing to fit the major capital projects into the financing model. Mr. Mason instructed Mr. Mynarski and Mr. Gieger to present their findings on the refined financing models in the following week when FY11 budget deliberations continue.

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,


Peter Mynarski, Recording Secretary


Michael S. Mason, Chairman