

**BOARD OF FINANCE**  
**Tax Assessor and Board of Education Budget Hearing**  
**MINUTES**  
**February 27, 2012**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Elaine Hammers called the budget hearing meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. at the Town Hall, Trumbull, Connecticut. All those present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

Members present and absent were as follows:

**PRESENT**

Chairman, Elaine Hammers  
Cindy Penkoff, Alternate  
Andrew Palo  
Tom Tesoro

**ABSENT**

Paul Lavoie  
Dave Rutigliano  
Steven Lupien

Also present: Maria Pires, Director of Finance; Timothy Herbst, First Selectman; Mark DeVestern, Tax Assessor; Ralph Iassogna, Superintendent; Dr. Cialfi, Assistant Superintendent; Stephen Sirico, Stephen Wright, Debra Herbst, Michael Ward, Jeffrey Hackett

**Tax Assessor**

Mr. DeVestern spoke to the Board regarding the recent revaluation and his proposed budget.

**Revaluation**

- 5-year update revaluation was conducted. It was not a physical door-to-door inspection, which is required every 10 years; we looked at sales data for residential properties and income statements for the commercial properties.
- Commercial and residential revaluations went out at the same time.

**522202 – Professional Fees**

- Reduced by \$10,000 for personal property audits by the F/S since there was low turnout during the appeals process. You must file an appeal at the Board level first. There are about 3 dozen commercial properties that have appealed. We used commercial appraisers from the area that were active to assist with the appeals.
- The real estate list went down approximately 16.5%; business went down to 15%; motor vehicles went up 5%.

**556601 – Professional Dev.**

GIS fees of \$1000 cover training; the assessor's office is going to be inputting the information.

**Education Budget**

**Issue: Code Red System**

- Mr. Iassogna indicated that he and Mr. Hackett would look into the Code Red system, currently being reviewed by the Police Department, to see if they can also use it.
- They are looking to tweak their existing system, since it can be repetitive.

### **Issue: Full Day Kindergarten**

- Mr. lassogna indicated that there is a concern that the cost of \$873,000 for full-time kindergarten is being regarded as full-time babysitting.
- Sub-committee formed for evaluation of FDK. Findings by sub-committee established the following:
  - Time was the critical factor in recommending FDK, since the state has increased the standards for children in kindergarten.
  - The Agenda could not be delivered in a 1/2 day session. This included curriculum as well as social needs.
  - Time needed for small group instruction; this allows for intervention on many levels
  - 1/2 to full day programs have reduced special needs; early intervention.
- Want parent-teacher discussion to determine if the child is ready for FDK; if not, can do 1/2 day until January and then move into FDK.
- The budget includes FDK and 1/2 day.
- Studies show that the economic status of a family puts children at an advantage; therefore, the sooner children of lesser means get into the school system the better.
- Children will be learning cognitive, social, and emotional skills.
- We anticipate 10% will not be ready for FDK; will want to spend time making sure these children do not have problems that need to be addressed; these children will leave earlier; these last 2 hours will be used to reinforce what has been introduced during the day, not for new experiences.
- Those children not ready for FDK in September should be ready by Thanksgiving.
- By third grade, children should be able to read to learn. Without early intervention, those children who are not ready to read to learn would not be identified until the third grade.

### **Issue: Special Education**

- Mr. lassogna indicated that there are people who say” they could never get the quality of special education in their town that we give in Trumbull”; this is not the result of what we do, but how we do it. We follow the mandates.
- The quality of services, not the quantity, is what attracts people; the way the staff approaches intervention, social and emotional curriculum, etc. This is the difference maker. Our costs are under control in comparison to those of other towns; we operate at a lower percentage than the state average.
- We keep our children here; we do not send them out of the district; can cost from \$53,000 per child upwards to \$200,000 needing residential placement; transportation costs can be nearly as high as the tuition.
- We are currently paying \$2.85 million for approximately 40 out of district placements, not including transportation.

### **Issue: Full Day Kindergarten Costs**

- The cost of FDK initially will be \$873,000 and will diminish as time goes on.
- Non-recurring costs - \$50,000 (i.e., furniture; instructional equipment, etc.)
- The \$873,000 is a firm cost; a good \$800,000 is salaries, without benefits.
- This is in addition to the existing kindergarten costs.

### **Issue: Non-Mandated Paraprofessionals, Interns and Substitute Teachers**

- There are currently 19 paras in the school system and each has a specific job. We cut 6 computer paras from the elementary schools last year.
- The computer lab usage was down 40% in the elementary schools; however, there appears to be more usage in these labs for math and language.
- In the upper grades, computer based learning time has gone down; without paras in the labs the teachers are making the best of it. There is no curriculum for computer skills and no benchmark for technology.

- There is a building para in each elementary school; a floater. There is one intern devoted to interventions.
- There are currently 8 extra interns in the Board's budget; they are actually teachers going for a 5th year degree, etc. This gives us a chance to see how they work with the children and we have hired new teachers that were interns.
- More important to use interns for intervention as opposed to using them as substitute teachers.
- It appears that we are using fewer subs this year than last year; however, the real driver of this account has to do with the number of long term subs who earn more than a regular sub because they are more specialized (etc).
- At times, we must pay both the "out" teacher and the substitute; other times we only need to pay the substitute.
- We currently have no paras kindergarten; however, we are budgeting for part-time paras in FDK to assist teachers in the classroom with small groups and to monitor lunch so teachers get one hour.
- Para provides back-up and damage control; helps keep the children focused.

**Issue: Loss of Reading Specialists**

- 80 children lost reading specialists; existing reading classes are larger.
- The reading specialists were restored in the 5.07% budget.
- There were 126 additional students in September that were not anticipated.
- The budget dictates what we are able to provide.

**Issue: Electives vs AP Courses**

- We currently off about 20 AP classes per year; we added 15 ECE courses, in addition to receiving AP, the children receive college credit; AP classes are college board driven.
- The staff is certified for an AP class not the school.
- The AP credit is given based upon you taking the test; no mandate that you take test after you complete class.
- Colleges decide whether or not you get credit for your AP class upon admission.
- We require a certain number of elective courses; we do not offer AP to supplant electives and not everyone qualifies for an AP course; we do not want students take study halls; prefer that students take a class.
- We are also concerned with the social and emotional development of the students; children need to learn the basics in order to survive in life, i.e. personal finance
- On-line classes would need to be monitored; our guidance counselor to student ratio is one of the highest and we cannot expect more of the counselors.
- The class sizes will be increased and there will be more study halls unless we restore teachers.
- High demand for Latin that we were unable to accommodate; could not find a qualified teacher.
- You do not need a world language to graduate; however, you need a world language to get into college.
- ECE teachers need to be certified by the University of Connecticut. They get dual credit; high school and THS. Students can get grants, etc., to pay for these classes and the rate is very favorable. Classes are held at THS.

**Issue: If 5.07% is cut down, what will you delete; if we go lower than the FS what will you delete**

- The difference between the F/S request and the BOE is \$1.4 million.
- \$800-900,000 would be for FDK; the remainder would be \$500-600,000.
- The goal would be to try to implement FDK using the F/S budget.
- We would have to find \$500-600,000 and we can only take this from a few areas.
- We could use any excess funds on non-recurring items and / or move for a supplemental appropriation.
- We want to understand the impact of the restorations and what it meant to our students.

- We have had flat budgets for 3 years, although we do get increases each year. When you take out FDK and contractual raises, our increase this year is about 3%, what a normal household incurs.
- Reductions will come in form of cutting staff.
- 2.5% decrease will result in cutting programs as well.
- 3.47% represents the core. To get the core and 3 restorations and FDT you would need 4 to 4.4%.
- Current legislation in Hartford – with permission of BOF – to preserve 1% if there is a surplus; can carry over a maximum of 1%.

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Phyllis Collier  
Board of Finance Clerk