

**MINUTES**  
**Board of Finance**  
**and**  
**Town Council Finance Committee**  
**Business Education Initiative and Board of Education Budget Hearing**  
**February 11, 2014**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Elaine Hammers called the budget hearing meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and at the Town Hall, Trumbull, Connecticut. All those present joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**PRESENT**

Elaine Hammers, Chairman  
Paul Lavoie, Vice Chairman  
Andrew Palo  
Thomas Kelly  
Roy Molgard  
Bill Haberlin  
Vincent DeGennaro, Alternate

**ABSENT**

Kristy Waizenegger, Alternate  
Karen Egri, Alternate

The Town Council Finance Committee did not have a quorum with three members present.

**PRESENT**

Cindy Penkoff  
Tony Scinto,  
Vicki Tesoro

**ABSENT**

Mark LeClair, Chairman  
Bethany Llodra Gilman, Alternate  
Lori Rosasco Schwartz  
Thomas Christiano  
Daniel Marconi, Alternate

Also present: Maria Pires, Director of Finance; Dr. Gary Cialfi, Superintendent; Shawn O'Keefe, Business Manager; Debra Herbst, Chairman, Board of Education; Dr. Michael McGrath, Assistant Superintendent; Jeff Hackett, Technology Manager; Roy Fuchs, TCT/BEI; Kate Donahue, TCT/BEI;; Byron Campbell, TCT/BEI; Dana Pierce, Principal Booth Hill School; Gary Kunschafft, Principal Daniels Farm School.

The Chairman indicated that the members of the Town Council Finance Committee may be joining the Board of Finance this evening. Members are welcome to take their name sign and join us up here where they will be recognized by the Chair for questions. All questions that you may have for a department should be directed to the Chairman of the Board, in writing, to eliminate duplication of efforts.

**Business Initiative Education**

Byron Campbell indicated that BEI assists students in K-12 the town to learn more about the work world through career exploration program activities and events. There is a 40 member board comprised of business and board of education individuals.

**Trumbull Community Television**

Mr. Fuchs gave a brief overview of the Trumbull Community Television/ Business Education Initiative:

- Provides community TV and video coverage for Boards and Commissions and events at schools, libraries and the senior center, rotary and chamber of commerce.

- TCT was recently awarded a grant for \$137,000; TCT received 50%, which will allow them to convert to HD digital, and to train more videographers. The remainder was given to Christian Heritage and St. Joseph High School.
- Video on demand is now almost a reality. It is currently working behind the scenes.

Mr. Fuchs indicated that they jointly requested the amount of \$89,799. The First Selectman reduced Programming and Expense \$17,000. These funds were to be used to expand videographer training and to pay the videographers and expand hours.

The Chair noted that program expenses were moved to account 522205 from 522204. Ms. Kate Donahue indicated that this was to consolidate to one account. The name change to Trumbull Community was done for clarity. She added that the original grant request was \$180,000 and they were awarded \$137,000. The funding is collected by the state and then given back in grant funds. Once they have their 501C they will be eligible for private grants. She went on to add that Christian Heritage and St. Joseph schools do not have equipment yet.

Without the \$17,000 funding there will be less of the programming.

### **Board of Education –PowerPoint Presentation**

Dr. Cialfi indicated that he is sensitive to the economic climate. He is also aware that today's children are facing a more challenging environment with higher standards being set for them by employers.

Dr. Cialfi indicated that the main points of the budget include staffing and technology. The carryover of \$874,000 will be spent on smart boards and other technology that the students need and deserve and 3.5 technology integration specialists to work with students and teachers. We currently need 139 smart boards to equip each classroom; some of those will be used to replace other equipment. A portion of the \$874,000 will also be used for the leasing program for laptops. It is a 4 year program and right now we are involved in 50% of that program for 2014 at a cost of \$75,000. The smart boards, at \$5,000 per unit, will cost \$695,000, along with \$8,000 for installation and software costs. The smart boards will put us in line with what other schools in the area are already using.

Mrs. Herbst congratulated Dr. Cialfi, Dr. McGrath and Mr. O'Keefe who were responsible for handing in a very reasonable budget. She indicated that she felt the priorities were clearly set and went on to add that smart boards are an investment for students; they are highly interactive and engaging and are replacing the chalkboards in the classrooms. She added that going forward, it will be mandatory for schools to conduct testing on computers, and we are not where we need to be.

Both Mr. Dana Pierce, principal of Booth Hill Elementary School, and Mr. Gary Kunschaff, principal of Daniels Farm Elementary School, spoke in favor of the smart boards. They pointed out how smart boards have a short learning curve, address all types of learning styles and have unlimited uses.

Dr. Cialfi indicated that the actual driver of this budget is the District Goal - to strengthen individual and collective practices in order to increase student learning and development. The focus areas include:

- Common Core State Standards (CCSS)  
Includes the technology for the on-line assessments; profession development, preparation, and training; curriculum revisions; updated classroom supplies; textbooks; on-line subscriptions,
- New teacher and administrator evaluation, professional learning plans  
Includes testing materials; resources for increased observations and review of practice; teacher and administrator training and preparation for trainers.

Dr. Cialfi indicated that the original budget was an increase of 3.69% over last year and far below past years. With further work and cuts, we were able to reduce it to 2.9%. The First Selectman reduced it further to 2.79%.

There is a mindset of shared fiscal responsibility; this year we instituted a fully funded insurance plan. We will realize a \$400,000 reduction in insurance waivers over the next year and a \$600,000 savings in Obama Care taxes.

The budget increases cover Salaries, Benefits, SPED Tuition and Transportation. Contractual obligations account for an increase of 93.48% with all other expenses accounting for an increase of 6.52%.

A Budget Staffing Analysis was provided, requesting 13.20 additions at a cost of \$897,015. These additions are about making sure that the students are connected to the staff at all times. Our per pupil expenditure has always demonstrated that we get the most for our dollar. If we were increasing our budget at 2.9% we would still be ranked low in per pupil cost, 15/21 in the district.

Mr. Palo inquired about the Central Registration Process. Dr. Cialfi indicated that this process comes out of Dr. McGrath's office. All state reporting has increased over the year; however, the staffing position would be designated to one person. The Central Registration process has shown that we have been doing our job very well. We have encountered 2 children who are still in the town schools that moved mid-year and several that are being investigated.

Dr. McGrath indicated that we have several scenarios:

- Homeowners - check your residency when the children enter kindergarten and we don't check again.
- Renters - register at assistant superintendent's office may require extra work
- Non-family member living at your residence; do you still live there (proof)

Dr. McGrath went on to add that there was a perceived need for either redistricting or modular buildings; therefore, we needed to verify that residency matches enrollment. No one will have to do this twice and seniors will be allowed to graduate even if they moved.

The law indicates that to verify residency - where a child sleeps is where he goes to school; very loose standard. The law does not state that it has to be a family member or even a guardian.

Mrs. Penkoff thanked Dr. McGrath for doing this and the lengths taken to verify residency.

Mr. Palo asked the cost per smart board, including the projector and the installation; he was told \$5000 per item.

Mr. Lavoie referred to adding 13 full time individuals given the fact that we have a 3.3% declining enrollment. Since we are moving in the direction of technology, why are we adding more secretaries; we should be automating. Dr. Cialfi indicated that the addition of clerical will free-up the health professionals so that they are available for mental health and not buried under paperwork. There will be 3.5 integrations specialists and the 6 additional paraprofessional that were added last year. We are looking to add an additional custodian given that the high school is now larger.

Mrs. Penkoff asked where the funds came from when the paras were added that were not in the budget. Mr. O'Keefe indicated that the funding came from cutting back expenses and there was a surplus last year.

The Chair asked that a 10 year history of the surplus acquired by the Board of Education be prepared and submitted to her. The Chair went on to ask if the schools are depending more on electronic communication with the parents rather than sending home information via the students. Mr. Cialfi indicated that we are doing a lot more paperless communication. Mr. Scinto disputed this and went on to demonstrate the amount of paper his daughter brings home on a weekly basis.

Mrs. Penkoff questioned the "bring your own device" to school policy. Mr. Hackett indicated that over 3000 devices go through the wireless network each day.

Mr. Lavoie questioned the 30% drop in the electricity that was budgeted. Mr. O'Keefe indicated that the Trans America contract with the Town is expiring and he anticipates a 35% drop. He went on to question the premium share decrease and was told that it was overstated last year. Mr. Lavoie then asked about the increase in the new bus contract. He was told that the contract went out to bid and the contract was awarded to the company that was going to provide new buses for the children. He also asked why the tuition outplacement for special needs students increased. He was told that the rates went up; not necessarily the number of students. Mr. Palo asked for the back-up on this – the schools where the students are being sent and what the state covers.

Mr. Lavoie asked where we stand on delaying teacher evaluations. Dr. Cialfi indicated that it will be delayed; nothing in the budget is driven by that. It is all common core driven. He then asked if we plan on redistricting this year and what cost would be incurred. Dr. Cialfi indicated that Frenchtown is the only school that might possibly be overcrowded and since it is only a placement issue the cost would be minimal. There are no state statutes driving the redistricting of schools.

The Chair questioned the transportation issues with buses having many stops that are quite close together and how long are the buses supposed to wait for the children. In the span of ¼ mile, a large bus makes at least 6 stops. Mrs. Herbst indicated that it was most likely the parents that are having the buses stop so often and not the transportation coordinator. Mr. Cialfi indicated that he would follow-up on this.

Mr. Kelly asked about the \$173,000 reduction in lease to non-public busing. Mr. O'Keefe indicated that it was erroneously put in the budget, since those funds are for non-public school busing, which is paid for by the town, not the BOE. Mrs. Pires indicated that this has been changed in the budget.

Mr. Kelly asked how the self funded insurance plan was working out. Mr. O'Keefe indicated that it was originally to be fully funded. By the end of the year, we should have enough to fund the INR; the second part is the corridor – we will need to fund 10% in excess of 1.3-1.5 million and will need to set up an IBNR.

The Chair indicated that the reserve will cover a 90 day window in the event you go back to an insurance plan. We insure the high risk and look at the whole plan and we also insure that portion in excess of what you would normally incur in expenses. Self insured plans do not incur an insurance tax and we recognized a savings of \$600,000.

Mr. Lavoie asked to be provided with the entire burden of adding the 9.8 FTEs to the budget. Mr. Palo asked why the First Selectman cut the BOE budget. Dr. Cialfi indicated that he would be meeting with him to discuss this. Mr. Scinto asked about BOE bonding authorization. The Chair indicated that she wanted a report of all outstanding bonding resolutions that we have approved and what they have been used for to date, since Mr. DeGennaro indicated that technology equipment should not be bonded.

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Phyllis C. Collier  
Board of Finance Clerk