

BOARD OF FINANCE  
BUDGET HEARING  
February 17, 2010

The Budget Hearing on the BEI and BOE budget for 2010-2011 was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Helen Plumb Building by Chairman Ken Martin.

Present were Ken Martin, Mark Smith, William Crooks, Andrew Palo, Tom Tesoro, Steve Lupien and alternates Alex Remson, Dana Misner.

Business Education Initiative – John Annix present for discussion. BEI is a 501C3 Tax-Exemption Foundation. The financial and people resources for BEI provides funding for BEI activities. They have a minigrant awards program, career exploration activities, and foundation related needs. They obtain contributions of \$20,000 a year. Senior videographers get \$25 and student videographers get \$15 for videoing town meetings, school activities, sporting events. There is no money for capital improvements in the budget.

Board of Education – Present were Ralph Iassogna, Supt., Ed Lovely, Chairman, BOE, Steve Sirico, Jeff Hackett, Steve Kennedy, Dr. Cialfi, Dr. Vespe

Mr. Lovely, Chairman, BOE, stated the BOE adopted its budget in the amount of \$86,175,290, a 2.54% increase over the 2009-2010 budget.

The Board's emphasis was on core academics, class size, and programs geared to meet the escalating needs of the diverse student population. The Board was aware of the economic climate of today.

The budget presented is at 2.54%, the lowest in years. The Board achieved its goals by utilizing the federal stimulus monies which totaled approximately 1.2 million dollars.

Mr. Iassogna stated this budget request underwent thorough, comprehensive and probing elimination at all levels. The amount recommended is a 3.53% (\$2,973,436) increase over the current school year's allocation and will support the basic student services and operational responsibilities. Every department will be affected and experience sizeable reductions by the F/S cut. Personnel is most impacted with 25 new and 4.5 existing certified positions removed.

The F/S reduction of 1.4 million dollars will greatly adverse our school system. Reductions in personnel include custodians, maintenance workers, district secretaries, para reduction time, THS staff reductions.

Mr. Tesoro asked if we sustain the 1.4 million dollar cut as recommended by the First Selectman, what would Mr. Iassogna recommend to the BOE in terms of cuts. Mr. Iassogna said he would have to discuss this with the BOE at their meeting on March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Mr. Iassogna said there is nothing else to reduce except programs and personnel. There were several staff reductions already made; however, because they were able to use some ARRA money, some of those positions came back.

1.4 million dollars translates into 23 teaching positions. The paraprofessionals are the one area which gives the most trouble. This is the one area in the budget that was increased.

Mr. Lupien noted that there were items not covered in the budget: all day kindergarten, digital white boards; portables. Mr. Iassogna stated that additional money would be needed for staffing all day kindergarten. Also by the end of 2011, the BOE will own all the modules. He would like to see ARRA money used for one time expenditures.

Mr. Lovely stated that they have been looking at 2011-12 for all day kindergarten. You need to have the space for this. White boards were taken out of the budget because they usually are put into a bond issue.

Mr. Crooks questioned why the TEA salary increase was 3.25% and the TAA salary increase was 3.85%. TEA salaries started higher and decreased; TAA had a 4 year contract, the first year already having been increased. Teacher retirement payouts...previous payments have been reduced to \$20,000. They could get anywhere from 0 - \$20,000 (maximum) with no sick time.

Mr. Crooks will review energy costs with Steve Kennedy. Special Ed transportation – why 5 new sites doubled in funds...This was for students who came in mid year.

Mr. Smith asked for a breakdown of where the paras are now? Mr. Iassogna stated they are across the Board depending on the need.

Ms. Remson asked in regard to paras...If it came down to cuts and it was between paraprofessionals and teaching staff, who would keep their job?...The paraprofessional was there for a particular student, that para is going to keep his job.

Special Ed transportation continues to grow. Many students are transported out of town to attend programs suitable for them. Whenever possible an attempt is made to “ride share” or “piggyback” with other towns. Bus aides must be provided on special education buses. There has been a number of special ed students who require bus aides during the regular school year and extended year.

Mr. Tesoro asked how many clubs have been cut in this particular budget. Mr. Iassogna stated that 50% of the clubs were cut two years ago 60 to 30. In this budget we moved back to 40.

Mr. Crooks asked about the ECS money. It appears the Board has been using up all of the \$432,000 in the current year. Comments have been made that you plan to return half of it to the town. Hence the First Selectman’s projected deficit of 1.3 million dollars may

only be 1.1 million dollars. But we haven't really heard a definite commitment on the town side as to whether we were going to get \$216,000 back yet I see you have a specific purpose for each of the \$432,000.

Mr. Sirico stated this money has to be realized as an expense. The Federal Government or state is going to come and look at the books and ask if we spent the money the way we were suppose to. We will not spend a minimum of \$216,000 of our money that will come back to you to offset this.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Bokine, Clerk