

TOWN COUNCIL
Town of Trumbull
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TOWN HALL
Trumbull

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**FINANCE COMMITTEE BUDGET HEARING
MARCH 28, 2012
MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Debra Lamberti called the FINANCE COMMITTEE Budget Hearing to order at 7:06 p.m. All present joined in a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance. The Chair asked all present to remember Kileigh Leos, daughter of Officer Jay Leos and Dawn Leos who is seriously ill.

The clerk called the roll and recorded it as follows:

Present: Vice Chairman Tony Scinto, Mark LeClair, Vicki Tesoro, Gregg Basbagill and Ann Marie Evangelista, Alternate.

Absent: Jane Deyoe and John DelVecchio, Jr., Alternate.

Also Present: Town Council Chairman Carl A. Massaro, Jr.,

01011800 Board of Assessment Appeals

Josephine Mills was present and indicated the first line item as:

- Clerical \$6,275
Ms. Mill suggested at the BoF meeting to reduce that number \$5,000 noting that they could do with less. The BOF did reduce the line item to \$5,000.
- The second line item is \$650 for legal notices - required by law.
- The professional development seminars were moved back into the individual departments' budgets by the BoF.

Ms. Mills stated that the board meets in the month of March and September for supplemental and personal property. Every election they have a new board member, it costs money for the new board member to learn what their responsibility entails this also allows the existing board members take a refresher course.

01060600 Business Education Initiative

John Annick, Byron Campbell and Kate Donahue were present. Mr. Annick indicated that he will be turning over his duties to Dan Newman Executive Director of the BEI Foundation and will be turning over his duties for Channel 21 to a Tri-Chair, Kate Donahue for administration, Byron Campbell for the technical and Roy Fuchs for programs.

- \$20,000 was requested for the supervisor producer position. The First Selectman recommended the \$20,000. The BOF eliminated the \$20,000 for this position. Mr. Annick requested that the Town Council restore the \$20,000.
- Each cable customer pays \$7.50 of their bill to a state fund; it is then paid to the community provider, Charter. Approximately \$450,000 is collected by the state from both AT&T and Charter bills to operate Channel 21. Trumbull Community Television receives no operational funding from the \$7.50 fund although there is capital funding available for equipment.
- There are 3 parts of the budget: Utilities for the Helen Plumb building (controlled and paid by the Town's Finance Dept.), BEI budget, (\$3,500 for costs for Mr. Newman, the secretary and refreshments), the \$20,000 for videographers and the additional \$20,000 request for the producer position.
- Mr. Campbell explained the \$20,000 request allows for the staff, efficiency, have a better work flow and the upgrading the VOD, (Video on Demand). The VOD is currently being installed. Mr. Annick explained Channel 17 was to be a lab at the HS for the students; the producer is in contact with the teachers at the HS to bring on more students. If the \$20,000 is not restored it will take longer to implement the VOD. The new studio at the HS operates under the BOE.

01060000 Board of Education

Superintendent of Schools Ralph Iassogna, Assistant Superintendent of Schools Gary Cialfi, Shawn O'Keefe, Business Manager; Stephen Wright, Chairman, Board of Education; Loretta Chory, Board of Education; Dr. Linda Paslov, Curriculum Director; Jeff Hackett BOE IT Director

- The BOE request had been reduced by \$1.862 million and requested that the committee does not reduce the budget any further.
- The CT K-248 monies earmarked last year by the BOF is to allow the BOE to carry it over at approximately \$874,000. The BOE has not committed to using those funds and appears unlikely that they will.
- There are three initiatives proceeding to the BOF and the Town Council:
 1. Technology Bond – First Selectman Herbst removed \$692,000 from the BOE budget and combined with year 1 of the Technology plan total bond is now at \$1.36 million.
 2. Security at \$830,000 - More specificity would need to take place in executive session.
 3. Field renovations and repairs at \$1.7 million – After discussions with the First Selectman prior to this meeting, First Selectman Herbst is supporting \$500,000 in field renovation. The \$500,000 would be for the McDougall Stadium. Once the BOF and the Town Council makes their decisions, the BOE can bring more specificity to the reductions with regard to the \$186.2 million.

Mr. Iassogna indicated if the three initiatives were not approved, the BOE would have to make a determination if they would fund them with the \$874,000 and they would have to cut \$1.862 million in current staffing programs starting with materials and supplies, after they reach \$750,000-\$850,000 the reductions are people. If all three items are funded the BOE is still faced with the \$1.862 million reduction, the \$874,000 has not been applied to anything yet and could be applied to the \$1.862 resulting in a \$1 million cut.

Potential Savings:

- BOE went out to bid on transportation-Dattco is the new bus company – seven vendors bid, three were interviewed. The potential for savings is minimal, possibly \$50,000

- Anthem Health Insurance – the rate will not be known until next month, rates are based on experience. They went in at 9% and are hoping it will go down. The savings could be \$100,000.

Mr. LeClair indicated that the BOE budget increases have outpaced inflation for a period of time and have impacted the Town's demographics. In 1996 Trumbull was a low tax town, 15%-19% of the population was 65 years old and older and our taxes were at the 96% of the state average; our taxes are now at 140% of the state average with 6% of the male population and 8% of the female population at 65 years and older. Mr. Lassogna explained that this had happened throughout the country fortunately in Trumbull they were able to reduce the magnitude of the growth, the per pupil expenditure is low compared to the State. Trumbull's DRG is lower and are doing their best to offset this. The efficiencies they have enacted lowered it even more. The amount of mandates that have come down from the state are enormous, this drives up their budget. They understand there is only so much the taxpayers can afford; the BOE has not requested technology since 2005-2006. Mr. LeClair noted that Trumbull has gone from 96% to 140% of the state average, all of the Towns in state have received the same mandates, if there are no people in Town with no children and the senior population is diminished this will be a problem, noting it is necessary to have those demographics as well. Mr. O'Keefe noted that salaries and benefits account for 82% of the BOE budget adding in special education and transportation that is 92% of the budget. The remaining 8% is low or negative.

- Mr. Hackett indicated the BOE has spent \$20 per student per year on Technology. Mr. Scinto requested a detailed BOE technology plan. Mr. Hackett provided the plan to Mr. Scinto. Mr. Wright indicated that there is a detailed 3-Year Plan on the state website, every Town is required by law to provide a detailed plan.
- Dr. Paslov explained that they are in the process of catching up on new curriculum writing based on Common Core State Standards adopted in July 2010 and will be reflected in the 2014-2015 school year testing. They are expected to deliver to the students 21st century skills, college and career readiness, the students need to know how to use technology. Common Core Standards impact English, Language Arts, and Mathematics, literacy, Science and technical subjects. They are very busy updating everything and NEASC is coming in the fall. In order for the HS to pass NEASC wants to see the curriculum updated. Professional development is important and is required and there is a new teacher evaluation plan, the students' growth needs to be documented, technology is necessary to maintain all of this data. Text books need to be updated to reflect the Common Core Standards. This budget includes 16 line items and is all part of the core. If this budget is cut it impacts many other areas. Mr. Cialfi spoke to the importance of professional development along with implementing new curriculum. The curriculum drives the need for common assessments; these are labor intensive budgetary items. The staff does work with the students to make sure they have their first choice in classes, there are classes that are more popular than others where they do fill up quickly, and this will become more of a problem when the students are required to take 25 credits for graduation.
- Dr. Cialfi stated that he is concerned for next year's budget, if they are not careful now it will make it a compounded problem; the 25 credit requirement for graduation will be required in 2018 and will affect students entering as freshman in September 2014. A 4-Year pathway has to be planned and will require an increase of staffing.

- Mr. lassogna stated the \$874,000 is available, in an ideal situation it would be carried over. There is a sense that they will have to use the \$874,000 in some fashion for the 2013-2014 academic year, whether it is to offset the \$1.862 million reduction or for security or technology. This has not been determined yet.
- This year's snow removal budget will be refundable and will go to the Town when it is received. Mr. lassogna stated that they are currently working with FEMA and their insurance carrier.
- The estimated reduction of 180 students in the future will make things easier. In 2015 the BOE will have to have an outside consultant review and possibly look at a school closure. The trend is that the student population is getting lower at the elementary level, and is starting to reduce at the middle school level, (Madison is losing 50 students and has been reduced by two teachers). Currently every elementary school classroom is utilized with one teacher and 20-25 students except Middlebrook. Middlebrook has three classrooms vacant. There are six modular that they are trying to eliminate for security reasons. Frenchtown is expected to lose 50 students next year. The BOE projections have been accurate in the past. The goal is to phase out the portables for regular classrooms at the elementary schools this September 1, 2013.
- There are four security monitors who have been hired are very qualified, they are temporary positions to monitor the portables, if the portables are phased out they would not be needed. Their presence is another sense of security. If they are permanent positions it would require salary and benefits.
- Mr. lassogna indicated the BOE may go towards self-funding health insurance which will result in a savings, the BOE and the Town will be provided with a preliminary assessment draft. A Tri-Board meeting with the BOE, BOF and Town Council was recommended; if everything falls in place they could be self-insured by July 1st. Mr. O'Keefe stated the projections are savings of \$1.4 to \$1.5 million in the first year and \$500,000 to \$700,000 per year thereafter. They need to build a reserve for bad claim years. A stop loss policy would also be taken out. 60% of the districts are self-insured and many districts have already moved to being self-funded due to avoiding the fees for being fully insured under Obamacare. Mr. lassogna indicated that they had been self-insured in the 1980's & 1990's. In 1996 they changed over to being fully insured.
- The estimated number of retirements included in the BOE budget is 9.
- There are 2.0 guidance counselors at the HS in the BOE requested budget and are strongly supported.
- The driving force to the 7.5% increase to superintendent's teachers budget, there were extra teachers in kindergarten. There are occasions when it is necessary that three teachers are out of the classrooms for a day substitute teachers need to fill in for those professional development days, including the new teacher evaluation. Coverage is needed.

There being no further business to discuss and upon motion made by Mr. LeClair, seconded by Mr. Basbagill the Finance Committee of the Trumbull Town Council adjourned at 8:37p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Margaret D. Mastroni, Town Council Clerk