

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

TOWN COUNCIL/BOARD OF EDUCATION JOINT MEETING

HICKS MEMORIAL MUNICIPAL CENTER 6TH FLOOR COUNCIL CHAMBERS

MARCH 4, 2014 - 7:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jack Scavone, Chairman; George Baker, Vice-Chair; Richard Field; Paul Krasusky; Jan Rubino and Ben Stanford

MEMBERS ABSENT: William Eccles

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS PRESENT: Sam Adlerstein, Chairman; Patrick Doyle, Vice-Chair; Steve Clark; Alfred Fratoni; Tom Frattaroli; Kathy Gorsky; Karen Moran; Robert Pagoni and Joseph Sce

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

OTHERS PRESENT: Steven Werbner, Town Manager; William Guzman, Superintendent of Schools

- 1. Call to Order – Pursuant to Section § C9-4 of the Town Charter the Town Manager is required to call and attend a joint meeting of the Town Council and Board of Education for the purpose of discussing the appropriation request of the Board of Education – Explanation of the budget process by the Town Manager**

Steven Werbner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and invited Mr. Adlerstein, Chair of the BOE, to speak.

Sam Adlerstein spoke on behalf of the BOE, and used a PowerPoint during his presentation.

There were four things that he was going to speak about: Review, Partnerships, Plans and Next Steps.

Back in November they started with a script. They wanted to know how much it would cost for a level budget; what would be their priorities and how could they afford that through cost savings. They have filled in the blanks, and as it turns out, the cost for a level budget was an increase of 3.44%, or the cost of \$1,241,130. Then above and beyond that would be priorities for investment and potential cost saving projects. The budget that the BOE passed was a 3.44% level increase, although he said it is still a work in budget.

On December 3, 2013, the Council and the BOE had a meeting and came up with the following agreement:

We each share an equal role in maximizing the usage of town resources to provide the highest quality of service which balance top priority needs within financial constraints. We will communicate with and engage the community in a positive way.

They agree to: engage with each other in a respectful, professional matter; view things from a broader perspective, community-focused, not us versus them; listen, understand and share in a clear, specific and accurate manner; engage in joint communication early and often; surface and acknowledge disagreements and agreements; and identify and work toward a shared goal.

Mr. Adlerstein pointed out that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the increase is for health insurance and salary, fringes and pension. The remaining is transportation, substitute teachers, outplacements, magnets, other schools and all other.

Some investments they can't afford yet include: all-day kindergarten, a resource officer, pay to participate and technology. They are still working to try to afford some of these things.

Partnerships:

- Budget Goal
- Shared Services
- Technology Advisory Board
- Volunteer Painting
- Public Participation
- Communications and Outreach
- Community Conversation Grant

Plans:

- Initiative ideas
- Curriculum
- Technology
- Facilities

They want to move forward on planning by focusing on the positive.

What is next?

Quantify plans for impact in targeted areas:

- Safety/Climate
- Health Insurance
- Transportation
- Substitutes / Curriculum / Kindergarten
- Facilities / Technology / Utilities
- Extracurricular
- Budget Practices

He commented that during the workshops, they had the principals in discussion groups with the residents. Items that were identified as needs in the schools were:

- Special Education Lacking
- Lacking to Common Core Standard
- Failing Technology & Infrastructure
- Lacking Security
- High Impact Program Investment
- Extra-Curricular

All of these are top priority.

Mr. Werbner thanked the BOE for the work and journey they've been on. He updated that he currently is finalizing his recommended budget, and this is the upcoming schedule:

March 11th, he would like to submit to the Council his recommended budget;

March 12th, they start their budget reviews for the town departments;
March 26th, he holds a public hearing on his proposed budget at THS @ 7:30 p.m.;
April 1st, the Council finalizes their budget, which goes to referendum;
April 23rd, is the Council's annual budget presentation at THS;
April 24th, is the Council's annual budget presentation at the Senior Center; and
May 6th, is the budget referendum.

If the referendum does not pass on May 6th, a referendum will be held every two weeks until it does pass.

Mr. Werbner said that he recognizes Mr. Adlerstein's comment that this is a work in progress, but unfortunately it has to end and become a finite document at some point in terms of a budget that goes to referendum. As he makes his recommendation to the Council, all he can do is recommend a number. He agrees on a lot of what Mr. Adlerstein said in terms of the improvement items, but Mr. Werbner has no plan that shows him how that will be done or if it could be done. He will be recommending a number to the Council with statements in blind faith that hopefully something can be done. 3.44% is one of the highest percentage increases in some time, and he thinks people want to know what they will be getting out of the 3.44% if they are going to support it. There is a lot of work that needs to be done in the next two weeks.

Mr. Werbner reminded that by law, the Council, and/or him as the Town Manager, cannot dictate to the BOE how their money is spent.

2. Shared Services Task Force – Recommendation for shared services between Town and BOE

Mr. Werbner said he knows the number one recommendation for the next fiscal year was to look at a combination for facility management of some sort, and then moving forward with that concept. In his budget he does start that process in terms of managing the newly installed HVAC systems, both in the BOE and the town. He recommends they continue with having an HVAC supervisor. This person would be in charge of the combined systems. That position for the next fiscal year can be paid out of the ESCO project, and will have no impact on the BOE or town budget. Although it does require that the contractual services associated with HVAC management, as well as supplies associated with HVAC management, are properly budgeted both in the BOE and town. He has provided Mr. Adlerstein and Mr. Guzman with a spreadsheet that outlines what they feel are the appropriate expenses in order to properly manage those systems into the next fiscal year. They worked with John Carroll on this. It is essential that we have proper oversight of the systems, not just with personnel, but with professional contractual arrangements to ensure that we have the longevity of the systems that we all desire.

As stated, the HVAC supervisor position will be paid for one year out of the ESCO project. Also, a lot of the systems will be on their one year warranty. In fiscal year 15/16, that all falls by the wayside. The present breakdown for the ESCO project is 95% BOE and 5% town in terms of costs associated with that project. The BOE has to start thinking about how they will absorb the cost of the positions that would necessary to be involved with this combined function. There is also a recommendation of having a facilities supervisor. This supervisor would oversee the entire unit. Other maintenance aspects of facilities (painting, electrical, plumbing), but would not include the HVAC. It would be for other aspects other than the HVAC systems, and custodial. The first step we are focusing on is the HVAC supervisor.

Mr. Stanford gave background on the task force. It was made up of 2 BOE members and 3 Council members. They recommend that the following areas should be investigated, in addition to the facilities management:

Maintenance, technology, safety and resource officers, The Voices Program, custodial, finance and business services, looking at areas to outsource, and he added looking at how we handle polling places (possibly scheduling school in-service days on general election days). This is a work in progress.

Mr. Scavone wants to make sure that what is incorporated in the spreadsheet is included in the BOE's budget. Mr. Werbner said what is included in the spreadsheet should be included within the operating budgets of the school systems. He said the total does not reflect all new money. Some of it is already in the budget. They need to match up what is in the budget to what is on the spreadsheet. Mr. Adlerstein will take that as an exercise from tonight's meeting.

3. Presentation by the Town Manager of anticipated revenue stream for the next fiscal year and potential impacts of the Governor's Budget proposal

Mr. Werbner advised that the Governor's budget came out several weeks ago. In terms of revenue, we are neutral. He will be proposing an additional \$100,000 in revenue. The increase in the grand list of .39% is about another \$154,000 in terms of new money. We are talking about starting off with \$254,000 in new revenue. Any expenses above \$254,000 would require a tax increase. It is better news than he has had in the past.

4. Questions from the public (2 minute limit) specific to the Board of Education budget with questions being directed by the Town Council Chair to the appropriate body for response

Kevin Kasai of 33 Wildwood Road: Change in the culture. The government needs to change the process to see change. He spoke of a conversation he had with a few Council members. He urges all involved in the process to start taking an approach of curiosity rather than one of judgment towards the other side.

Dale Kasai of 32 Marbella Lane: Why isn't all-day kindergarten in the budget? 88% of all kindergarten students enrolled in Connecticut are in a full day kindergarten program. 45 out of 50 states have fully adopted the common core program. He spoke of the hourly breakdown of half day kindergarten versus full day kindergarten. How can the missed time be made up as they move forward into the first, second, and third grade.

Mr. Adlerstein said they are trying to come up with a number that can be supported. Things are still happening that may enable some of the priorities to fit in the budget. To say all-day kindergarten is not in the budget is not a final decision yet.

Cristine Divenere of 32 Bennett Drive: She works in half day kindergarten. She sees the demands of the teachers, and she sees the effects of the students. How is the town going to meet the needs of the common core? She knows what gets cut, because she sees it.

Rebecca Risley of Mountain Spring Road: Are you listening to those in favor of full day kindergarten. There is a new standard in Connecticut, as well as 45 other states and territories, common core. Under the regulations of common core, the requirements for kindergarten are based on children receiving a full day of instruction. Half day instruction will not prepare the kids with what they need for the first grade. Was the information as she presented clear? What will it take to convince you to move on this vital issue?

Mr. Werbner said from his perspective, he has never seen more clear argument on both sides of the fence. The information is clear that has been sent. He believes that the community has been more than clear and has educated him. The issue is "what are the priorities" and what are the funding opportunities.

Mr. Adlerstein said they do not need more information. They have had a lot of discussion on this. They have weighed out both the pros and cons of all-day kindergarten. Hearing the voices of the folks in the schools, and teachers on the front line, is important to them.

David Garrett of 23 Rudansky Lane: He advised to fly a commercial plane requires 250 hours, and we think that we can neglect 450 hours per kid for kindergarten? He asked the Council how they can justify complementary bulk waste pick up six times a year, yet turnaround and say we don't have \$66,000 for education for these kids.

Mr. Werbner said the Council has not had the chance to deliberate the bulky waste issue because he just brought it up at a meeting a week ago. This is the type of balancing act that they will make in terms of determining what it is that they recommend for a final budget number.

Donna Hryn of 136 Rhodes Road: She has spoken on this issue and she is not in favor of all-day kindergarten. She represents a number of parents who have first graders that have come through just fine with half day kindergarten. She asked if the Council will make their decisions on the input from a group that is well organized, even though there are many other parents in this town.

Mr. Werbner said in terms of the Council, they can only approve a number. They can't dictate one program over another. They can't say all day kindergarten will come out of the approved number. It is up to the BOE how they prioritize.

Ms. Rubino said she is on the fence. She is not sure all-day kindergarten is a priority for this year. She is not saying she is against all-day kindergarten or half day. She said this BOE has done more work and due diligence. The BOE is listening to all of you. She is impressed, and she is likely to support the budget that they bring forward. She also believes they will do the same due diligence with the monies received.

Mr. Krasusky said they are listening to the community's support for the budget.

Mark Gill of 32 Neff Hill Road: He thanked the Council and BOE for all the work invested. He has seen progress. He sees a lot more 'working' together. He has two boys going into kindergarten next year. He realizes they need to prioritize and knows they will do the right thing.

5. Petitions and/or questions to the Board of Education from Town Council members specific to the BOE Budget

Mr. Stanford asked about the DRA Facilities Study: When will you get the results. Patrick Doyle said they will have the final facilities workshop on March 27th. That needs to happen, so one more opportunity is available for comment, before they can complete their final report to share with the BOE.

Mr. Field said because of the work they have done it is his thought that he will agree with what they put out. He asked if they are comfortable with the budget. If they are, he will support it. If they aren't, he may try to see if the Council will add a few bucks.

Mr. Clark said the 3.44% is what is sustainable. It's not necessarily what they thought would pass. It is just to sustain. Of course, they would like to have more money. They feel they can make the 3.44% work. If you feel you can put more money in, then do that.

Bob Pagoni said the definition of insanity is doing the same thing and expecting a difference. The Board has been working together and they are doing a great job. If you have a few extra bucks you want to give us, by all means throw it on the pile. This group will use it efficiently.

Mr. Scavone applauds the work that the BOE has done. The Council was in their shoes two years ago. He thinks they have showed them up as far as what they have done in the past 11 weeks. They have his support. He believes they are all in the same frame of mind and are getting close. They all want the right things.

Ms. Rubino said there are a lot of things in the works that are community efforts. If you are interested in getting involved, she suggested that you contact anyone on the BOE or herself. A lot can get done by putting in some sweat equity.

6. **Adjournment:** Rick Field moved to adjourn the meeting; Seconded by George Baker at 8:15 p.m. All were in favor.

Steven R. Werbner, Town Manager

Michelle A. Finnegan
Town Council Clerk