

**MINUTES  
SPECIAL MEETING  
BOARD OF FINANCE – 2016/2017 BUDGET REVIEW  
OXFORD TOWN HALL  
MONDAY, MARCH 14, 2016 – 7:30 P.M.**

Present: Chairman Jack Kiley; Tom Kelly; Lila Ferrillo; Robert DeBisschop; Sue Arpin; Dana Flach. Also present: James Hliva, Finance Director.

Also present: Kevin Maloney from Connecticut Conference of Municipalities ("CCM"); Members of the Board of Education (Annie Ortiz, Superintendent; Rosemary Hanson, director of Finance; Amy Cote, Chairman; David Yish, Secretary-BOE)

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Kiley at 7:30 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The purpose of the meeting was to review the FY 2016-2017 Board of Education budget requests.

The meeting opened with a presentation by Mr. Kevin Maloney, representative from CCM. Mr. Maloney discussed how funding will be appropriated to cities and towns by the State and commented on what a cautious time cities and towns are experiencing. There are more pending cuts, but Oxford is in good position to gain money. Perhaps this money should be put aside into certain line items. Tough times will be ongoing for at least another fiscal year. Oxford is run well and financial situation is solid. The rest of his presentation covered governmental situations, proposals and cuts and some municipal aid. Governor has proposed \$120MM in cuts to spending this fiscal year by governmental with \$20MM of those cuts coming from municipal aid.

The three main issues for CCM are (1) to protect the Town's level of state aid; to see that no new laws are passed to force expenditures to go up; and new first time cap on municipal spending does not come into pay until one year (next summer).

Bob DeBisschop asked Mr. Maloney about the current status of DMV shifting of responsibility to tax clerks. Mr. Maloney replied that CCM is working very hard to defeat this because motor vehicle taxes would be reduced by about 5%. This revenue is too important to towns. Towns should not have to pay for DMV operational difficulties.

**Board of Education:**

Rosemary Hanson, Amy Cote and Superintendent Annie Ortiz were present to explain the new budget requests.

Amy Cote, 42 Newgate Road, Oxford, CT, Chairman of Board of Education

Ms. Cote begins the discussion by explaining the process of developing the budget numbers. In October/November administrators and team of teachers get together to develop numbers for what they need. Those numbers are brought to superintendent and business manager. Finance and Subcommittee also work with superintendent and business manager. T

Annie Ortiz, Superintendent of Schools, begins her presentation. A development of a three-year operating plan was developed this year. All monies requested for all the schools are based on this three-year operating plan. Impact of this budget has to do primarily with salaries.

SRBI is an opportunity for students who may need more work to challenge them has not previously been in place in school district. Common Core continues to develop so new textbooks, resources and educational materials are needed. The increase in Professional Development (35.97%) is to cover the need for updated resources, workshops are provided to bring teachers up-to-date. Professional development is also needed for special needs students.

Ms. Rosemarie Hanson, Finance Director, presented the Utilities item. The budget request has gone up \$80,000, to \$550,000.00. The electricity line item was \$75,000.00. Electricity line item was decreased for current year but it will go over.

Great Oak School is primarily heated by electricity.

The other increase was water to cover the irrigation system at the high school.

Mr. Kiley commented that the increase in electricity offset by fuel oil.

Textbooks have increased by 75.37% due to trying to go digital so students have access. Hard textbooks have become very expensive. Additional cost is tear-out schoolbooks; students can tear out pages to take home.

Transportation has increased. Next year will be the fifth year of a six-year contract. Actual contract has increased 3.5%, but with lower fuel costs, actual increase is 2.04%.

Instructional Equipment increase request is large, but this is the one line item that Board consistently gets cut. Instructional Equipment involves purchasing technology, smart boards and computers.

Mr. Kiley questioned if Great Oak was getting all computers replaced. Ms. Hanson said the computers were all purchased at the same time and are nine years old. Computer memories are increased/upgraded before new computers are purchased. Problems arise when older computers can no longer support updated software.

David Yish feels that Instructional Equipment should be included in Capital Request. Smart boards and computers should be included in Capital Request not Instructional Equipment.

Mr. Kiley explained that in the past this was done to contain the expense of Board of Education budget.

Mr. DeBisschop noted that capital expenditure is any item over \$5,000. A continuing purchase for an operating need even if it is over \$5,000, then it goes into operating budget as opposed to capital expenditure.

Mr. Kelly commented that an issue is the inflationary impact of cost of education because of non-recurring type of expenses. This pushes up the overall value of budget. The BOE should isolate items that are one-time purchases into proper category.

Mr. Kiley suggested that computers be included in operating budget on the same premise as textbooks in the past, since this is an ongoing item.

Ms. Ortiz continued to explain that the BOE is conscientious about due diligence. She discussed the alternate education program (Connections). This involves students that need to be in a smaller learning environment. BOE was able to do this without it being in the budget. It is in the new budget request for utilities and rental space.

Ms. Ferrillo asked for entire cost of alternate education program.

Ms. Ortiz discussed the budget for teaching staff, tutor requirements, SRBI.

Ms. Hanson went on to discuss medical insurance numbers. She said she will present that figure to Mr. Hliva when numbers are available.

Mr. Kiley pointed out that the main increases in the BOE budget are salaries and benefits. He asked how all-day kindergarten was funded. Ms. Ortiz said that a second grade teacher went into kindergarten. There are 3 paraprofessionals for six teachers. There is one less music teacher at middle school level. Mr. Kiley noted that there was no increase in staff to do all-day kindergarten.

Benefits of non-certified employers are typically more than the salaries. Ms. Flach asked if two part-time people could be hired instead of one full-time person.

Mr. Kiley asked if six new employees are “nice to have” or necessary. Ms. Ortiz responded that SRBI teachers are necessary. Tutors from Kindergarten through Grades 1-2 are provided through grant money.

Ms. Arpin asked if tutors could work staggered hours, i.e. under 20 hours, to eliminate benefits.

Ms. Cote commented that the budget requests are necessary for the best interests of the students. For example, SRBI can intervene earlier to eliminate costs for special education down the road.

Mr. Kiley noted that projection for enrollment is down for the next year. Ms. Hanson said yes, and the kindergarten teacher will have to be looked at after enrollment numbers are in during the summer.

Mr. Kiley also noted that Board of Education budget is approximately 75% of the Town budget.

Mr. Yish noted that the Board of Education made modest increases to their budget and hoped that the BOF would understand that the budget is ultimately for the benefit of the students and the Town.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. DeBisschop made a Motion to adjourn. Mr. Kelly seconded the Motion. All in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

X Lynette Steeves  
Lynette Steeves  
Clerk

16 MAR 21 PM 5:09  
TOWN OF UNFORD, CT  
Margaret A. West  
TOWN CLERK