

**MINUTES  
SPECIAL MEETING  
BOARD OF FINANCE – 2017/2017 BUDGET REVIEW  
OXFORD TOWN HALL  
TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2016 – 6:00 P.M.**

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

Also present: Members of the Board of Education (Annie Ortiz, Superintendent; Rosemary Hanson, Director of Finance; Amy Cote, Chairman; Diane Soracco, Chairman, Finance Committee)

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Kiley at 6:00 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The purpose of the meeting was to review the FY 2017-2018 Board of Education budget requests.

**Board of Education:**

Rosemary Hanson, Amy Cote, Diane Soracco 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. Administrators, team of teachers and a group of parents 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. These meetings determine feasibility of needs and what items can put off till another year. Original budget numbers represented a 4.16% increase but has been reduced to 3.01% through this process. Ms. Cote turned the meeting over to Ms. Ortiz, Ms. Hanson and Ms. Soracco.

Annie Ortiz, Superintendent of Schools, began her presentation. Ms. Ortiz told the Board of Finance that there are three pages that the Board will need to address (pages 1, 2 and 17). The fixed figures are based on benefits and salaries of certified and non-certified employees. There was a 15% increase on medical insurance (\$300,000). There were also Workers' Compensation claims which were also included. Software Maintenance showed a 41.1% increase due to new software for curriculum instruction which will assist in better management of curriculum preparation. Tuition for Special Education has increased. There were four (4) additional outplaced Special Education students. The numbers for this tuition is explained on Page 26 of the budget handout. Mr. Kiley commented that this is a fixed cost, no movement allowed on these costs. Ms. Ferrillo asked who made the decision about where the students are placed. Sometimes DCF makes the decision; sometimes there is mediation.

Ms. Ortiz discussed a new program called "Project Lead the Way" in the high school. There are expenses involving training staff and bringing in supplies to upgrade support process. There has been a decrease in textbooks because there has been a move from hard cover books to digital. Ms. Hanson noted that there are online fees. Ms. Cote noted that there are classroom sets for the student who does not own a computer.

Ms. Ortiz discussed looking for new premises for Board of Education Central Office which will include a lease and an additional cost of utilities. Utilities are not paid currently. Several locations have been investigated. Ms. Hanson said there is no price yet, although they are looking for a three-year lease. The approximate space needed is 5,000 square feet.

Ms. Hanson discussed the surplus in instructional equipment (laptops, Chromebooks). She suggested using the surplus in the upcoming year. Instructional Equipment involves purchasing technology, smart boards and computers.

Mr. Kiley asked for the reason for 3.01% increase when enrollment has decreased. Ms. Ortiz referred to Board to page 17 which explains the increase relating to staffing. Ms. Ortiz commented that the 3.1% represents maintaining support to students regardless of the reductions. Substitute teachers also received raises. There is a request for \$680,000. There have been two retirements. One fifth grade teacher was eliminated. Every year one position has been eliminated and this year is the fifth grade. A literacy coach position at Center School was eliminated. One preschool position was eliminated when the classrooms were combined.

After Ms. Ortiz responded to Mr. Kiley's question, Ms. Ferrillo commented that the question still had not been answered, that the explanation sounded like a wash. Ms. Ortiz countered that it was not a wash, because the 3.01% maintains moving forward and keeping students competitive with other towns. Oxford students have not always been on par with other towns.

Ms. Soracco stated that \$23,000,000 of \$29,000,000 budget relates to fixed costs concerning current staffing level. Graduation and accreditation are fixed costs; transportation is a fixed cost; tuition is a fixed cost. There are several items concern fixed costs.

Mr. Kiley explained that fixed is the current staffing level. Ms. Ferrillo stated that approximately 60% is increase in salaries, about four-fifths. Ms. Hanson discussed the possible reduction in staffing.

Ms. Hanson said the BOE is not in negotiations with any union regarding salary, save for a brand new union for this year consisting of five people, physical therapists and occupational therapists. Ms. Soracco said this is creating a new contract. Ms. Hanson said all the union contracts are settled.

Mr. Kiley addressed the reduction in repairs and maintenance (Page 1). Ms. Hanson said most of the expense in the past was due to purchase of ink cartridges for the smaller printers. The reduction is due to the making staff use the new Xerox printer. Xerox took over the printers and copiers.

Mr. Kiley questioned general maintenance for the buildings. Ms. Hanson stated that the detail for this expense is on Page 13. The maintenance supervisor is John Barlow. His salary increase is 3%. Mr. Kiley stated there is money in the school budget for maintenance; he asked what is considered maintenance. Ms. Hanson responded maintenance includes everything (electrical, repairs, plumbing, HVAC, mechanical).

Mr. DeBisschop commented about the end of the transportation contract. The contract ends this year. Bids will be going out.

Ms. Cote returned to the issue of enrollment. There are two grades, current fifth grade and current third grade, with significant drops. As the third grade moves through, a reduction of one teacher is possible. Certified teachers have been reduced over the last six years.

Ms. Hanson held a brief discussion regarding the handout that was passed to the Board of Finance since the Board only received their copies at the beginning of the meeting. There had been no opportunity for the Board of Finance to review.

Ms. Cote also mentioned that there is a goal to reduce the school year from 182 days to 180 days. State minimum is 180 days to teach. There would be a savings in transportation as well as other areas.

Mr. Kiley commented that the pre-school is down to one class. Ms. Ortiz responded that the program is having transition issues. It is supposed to be a peer model program but the way it is set up there are a lot of students from birth to 3 and the majority are special education students, which is mandated by the State. The program was originally set up with two regular education students with one special education students. When the Town began charging tuition for the regular education students to enter the program, attendance dwindled.

Mr. Hliva asked a question regarding the special education excess. There is \$550,000 listed on the BOE budget and the Governor's budget shows \$1.2MM under special education. Is the \$1.2MM part of this \$550,000; does it go directly to Board of Education or the Town? Ms. Hanson replied that she set this number the same way she's been doing it for years. The actual number is \$540,000. Theoretically, if the \$1.2MM went directly to the BOE, there would be \$750,000 of unanticipated revenue in this budget. Ms. Hanson also stated that this budget does not include anything to do with any invoice regarding TRB pension.

Mr. Kiley asked what is spent on legal. Ms. Hanson responded that it can go up to \$200,000, but the cost does fluctuate. Beginning on page 14, she provided three years of actuals. Ms. Cote reported on previous years' legal costs. This year the BOE budgeted for \$80,000.

Ms. Arpin asked Ms. Ortiz about professional development for teachers.

Mr. Kiley asked for a complete district total. Ms. Hanson said the totals are on page 1. Ms. Ortiz responded that details are by area. Mr. Hliva suggested preparing a report that shows totals by district.

Mr. Hliva asked Ms. Hanson if she knew what the normal percentage for funding of the teachers' pensions would be. She said she did not know. This number is in shown in the audit (unknown speaker).

Mr. Kiley asked for an overall head count for this year. Ms. Ortiz said she will provide this year and last year. Ms. Hanson commented that she has multiple years.

There was a brief discussion regarding medical benefits.

Ms. Cote commented that Capital Plan begins on Page 27. Capital Plan is ongoing. She gave an extensive explanation. The facility study was performed this year. The “green” column is current year. Replace playground equipment is in this column. Another issue is replacing the front parking lot. The parking lot will be replaced over two years. On Page 28, the window seals need to be recaulked and the cost is \$38,000. She continued with a lengthy explanation of several issues listed in the Capital Plan and associated costs by schools. There are many issues in connection with Center School.

Mr. Kiley asked how the \$90,000 figure was arrived at for ventilation at Center School.

Ms. Cote continued on with Great Oak school needed repairs which were addressed in the facilities study. Mr. Kiley asked where the price for repaving came from. He suggested that Ms. Cote speak with Wayne Watt, Public Works Director. He may be able to get a better price for the repaving.

There are two main items at the high school: reconfiguring lockers and window repair. An engineer is needed to assess the problem.

Mr. Kiley had a question regarding second grade playground repair. Can't Lily Park be used?

Mr. Kiley asked if everything on the 2016/17 capital plan had been completed. Ms. Cote said most everything is either completed or scheduled to be completed.

### ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Kelly made a Motion to adjourn. Mr. Kiley seconded the Motion. All in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 7:24p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

X Lynnette Steeves  
Lynnette Steeves  
Clerk

17 MAR 13 PM 5:44  
TOWN OF OXFORD, CT  
Margaret A. West  
TOWN CLERK