

Oxford Board of Education  
Special Meeting- Budget Workshop  
Oxford High School Library Media Center  
Tuesday February 18, 2014

**Call to Order:** Board Chairperson Diane Soracco called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Board Members Present: Diane Soracco, Stephen Brown, Melissa Cole, John Hatchell, Gerard Carbonaro, Dave Yish entered 7:20 p.m., Ex-Officio George Temple

Board Members Absent: Paula Guillet, Susan Kiernan, Amy Cote

Administration Present: Timothy F. Connellan, Superintendent; Rosemary Hanson, Director of Finance

### **Audience of Citizens I**

Jack Kiley, Board of Finance Chairman, indicated that it has been a pleasure working with the Board of Education in the past; praised the past BOE budgets noting some areas over which the BOE has no control; suggested that he looks forward to working with the BOE this year.

Tom Kelly, Board of Finance and liaison to the BOE, noted that he looks forward to working with the BOF and that the BOE can always count on the BOF for support

Liz Alagno, requested that the BOE include Full Day Kindergarten in the 2014-15 budget

Scott Capozza, Jen Florin, and Jill Gardner, also spoke in favor of FDK

Lauren Blaire, spoke in support of FDK as a basic academic need for students, providing vitally important resources to our youngest learners; she noted that she spoke on behalf of dozens of other parents who could not attend.

### **Budget 2014-15**

T. Connellan discussed possible reductions to the Superintendent's budget draft that have been developed over the past two weeks. The proposed reductions are primarily related to the personnel portion of the Full Day Kindergarten proposal, but also include some possible reductions scenarios to medical insurance by working with the Town. The personnel reductions to FDK include the following: four proposed full time paraprofessional positions and one proposed full time certified teaching position. Also considered for reduction are costs associated with current services that can be provided by the proposed Social Work position, costs associated with purchased services for curriculum support and some costs associated with non-instructional equipment. The proposed revisions could reduce the initial draft budget to an increase in the 3.95% range.

R. Hanson described the possible reductions as a way to construct the proposed budget and still be able to include funding for Full Day Kindergarten.

### **Motion 1**

- Motion **by G. Carbonaro** to remove all funding from the proposed budget for Full Day Kindergarten, **seconded by M. Cole**.

### **Discussion ensued:**

G. Temple summarized the following points: his personal perspective that FDK is not needed; he would support the BOE decision; a need for more data on student performance; other needs of the Town including capital expenditures for trucks, the Quaker Farms roof, building a new school to replace Oxford Center School; the need for the BOE not to rush into the decision but to phase it in.

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S. Brown indicated that FDK is not something the BOE just wants to do, but something it must do because of concerns with new and higher standards; the BOE's primary mission is to ensure the most robust education for students; the BOE has demonstrated that it does not spend money needlessly.

**Motion 2**

- Motion **by S. Brown** to postpone action on this item (Motion 1) until the next Board of Education meeting.

Discussion ensued regarding the proper handling of the two motions under Robert's Rules of Order. Points of order were considered and a copy of Robert's Rules of Order (abridged) was provided to the Chair for reference. Chairperson Soracco called for a brief recess for further review of the matter.

Return to open session 7:50 p.m.

Chairperson Soracco ruled that Motion 2, to postpone action, must be dealt with first.

- **Motion 2 seconded by D. Yish for purposes of discussion in the interest of expediency.**

**Discussion:**

S. Brown summarized the importance of the vote on Full Day Kindergarten, indicating that the full Board should be present; it is the most important issue the BOE will address in the next ten years

G. Carbonaro indicated the desire not to delay just because some members were absent and the need to decide tonight

M. Cole indicated a wish to make further comments regarding FDK but was advised by the Chair that the discussion should be with regard to the motion on the floor.

J. Hatchell requested further information regarding the possible reductions referred to by the Superintendent.

T. Connellan provided a brief reiteration of the reductions suggested for discussion at the outset of the meeting.

M. Cole noted a Point of Order, in that her comments on FDK had not been allowed.

S. Brown noted that the discussion should be only on the motion.

D. Sorracco, Chair, ruled that the question and discussion regarding the reductions was relevant to the motion under discussion.

R. Hanson explained and clarified where possible reductions were identified.

G. Carbonaro expressed dissatisfaction with the process.

S. Brown requested that the question/motion be called.

D. Sorracco re-read Motion 2

**[ Motion 2**

- Motion **by S. Brown** to postpone action on this item (Motion 1) until the next Board of Education meeting.]

**Votes: Aye, S. Brown**

**Nay, M. Cole, G. Carbonaro, D. Yish, D. Sorracco**

**Abstain, J. Hatchell**

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**Motion fails**

Chair D. Sorracco noted that Motion 1 was still on the table, re-read the motion.

**[ Motion 1**

- Motion **by G. Carbonaro** to remove all funding from the proposed budget for Full Day Kindergarten.]

**Discussion continued:**

D. Yish questioned the total amount for FDK

R. Hanson explained the personnel portion referred to in the proposed cuts and explained that amounts attributed to FDK were distributed throughout the initial budget documents and marked as FDK. A total amount will be calculated.

M. Cole summarized her feeling regarding FDK, questioning Oxford's ability to afford FDK long term; suggesting that other states with FDK are moving back to half-day due to funding concerns; suggesting that there are no studies of FDK with the Common Core State Standards implemented; questioned options for both full and half day programs; questioned studies showing achievement not beyond third to seventh grade; suggested that Oxford does not have the same dynamics seen in the studies (low income etc); noted that parents have responsibility to prepare their children for school and have lots of options; noted the need to fund other areas such as technology for the new assessments; the need to take more time.

S. Brown summarized his thoughts and reiterated the need for FDK in view of the greater demands on student; noted that the Board's primary responsibility is the education of children, not the fiscal position of the Town which is the Board of Finance's responsibility; that voting to remove the funding from the budget for FDK without even having the full Board present is a travesty.

J. Hatchell noted that he is a parent of a preschool aged child who would be affected by FDK; suggested the need to address twelve other grades as well; indicated the BOE is trying to make the decision with the best rationale; suggested that the Common Core has not yet been implemented (or at least not fully); noted that all of the BOE probably want FDK but that there is a cost associated with it.

D. Yish commented that it is not known how well our students perform relative to other students e.g. our District Reference Group (DRG); it is not known where we stand or how much FDK is going to matter.

G. Carbonaro requested that the question/motion be called.

**Chair D. Sorracco** re-read the motion:

**[ Motion 1**

- Motion **by G. Carbonaro** to remove all funding from the proposed budget for Full Day Kindergarten.]

**Votes: Aye: M. Cole, G. Carbonaro, D. Yish, D. Sorracco**

**Nay: S. Brown**

**Abstain, J. Hatchell**

**Motion carried.**

**Motion 3**

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- Motion by **S. Brown (as amended/restated by S. Brown)** to fund Full Day Kindergarten through reductions in the athletics budget/line items and that the Superintendent will make those reductions as he sees fit.

**There was no second, the motion did not come before the Board.**

**Audience of Citizens II**

Liz Alagno, questioned if there was anything that could be done to change the elimination of FDK from the budget.

Lauren Blaire, expressed her dismay, indicated that she was embarrassed for the Town and for the Board; indicated that the Board should be speaking for all students; expressed shock that Mr. Carbonaro would penalize the administration for coming to the meeting with reductions; suggested that Mr. Temple was not speaking for all of the Town; state the opinion that the Board was being extremely short sighted.

Jen Florin, suggested that she was speaking for other parents and as a teacher of grade 2 in Seymour where she has seen the results of FDK will all her students now performing above grade level; expressed disbelief about what just happened; questioned why the people cannot vote on the issue.

Sue O'Brien, questioned how you can assume that people do not want FDK when 86% of the parents surveyed wanted FDK; commented that abstaining is a waste of a vote; suggested that BOE members never intended FDK to be part of the budget.

Jill Gardner, raised the question why did the field go to a vote but not FDK?

Christina Dyer, noted that kindergarten is equal to all other grades, how can Oxford offer half of what the other grades are getting and that no other grade is cut in half due to funding; kindergarten should be treated the same as the other grades; questioned the remediation plan for kindergarten students moving on to first grade.

Meeting Adjourned by Diane Soracco 8::45 p.m.

Submitted by,  
Timothy F. Connellan