

FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION  
 MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
 Thursday, January 19, 2012

FEB 28 2012

APPROVED

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Education held Thursday, January 19, 2012, at 501 Kings Highway East, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room.

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by Ms. Pamela Iacono, Chairman. Other Board members present were: Mrs. Sue Brand, Mr. John Convertito, Mr. Philip Dwyer, Mr. Paul Fattibene, Mrs. Jessica Gerber, Mr. Tim Kery, Mr. Perry Liu and Mrs. Jennifer Maxon Kennelly (arrived 7:38 p.m.) Also in attendance were Superintendent Dr. David Title and members of the administrative staff. Approximately 75 people comprised the remainder of the audience.

1. Ms. Iacono led the Board and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Discussion of the Superintendent's Recommended 2012-2013 Budget Request-

Dr. Title stated that there were a few items from the last meeting that he thought would be helpful to have an elementary principal and a high school headmaster speak to.

Fairfield Warde Headmaster Mr. Jim Coyne discussed access to computers with the elimination of the computer lab paras. He stated that in preparation for this year, a team from Warde and a team from Ludlowe met to talk about access and how the computer labs would be managed without the paras. A system was developed in which teachers have a sign up process for each house lab and a way to report any problems with the computers in the labs. The one area the sign up process in the three labs did not address was the independent use of computers by students. In the main library there is a bank of 25-30 computers that were made accessible to students on an individual basis and no longer allow those to be signed up for by a class. In addition, the MAC lab in the library media center has been turned into a teacher duty so there is a little more access to the MAC lab. Mr. Coyne stated that so far there has been adequate access for independent use of computers by the students, and the teachers have been able to access the labs through the sign up process. This has been implemented at both high schools, and it is his understanding that it is working just about the same way at Ludlowe.

Board questions and comments followed.

McKinley School Principal Dr. Ginger Vail spoke on the necessity of clerks in the afternoon at the elementary schools. Students at this age need supervision. It is a lot for one person in the afternoon to maintain phone coverage for changes in afternoon dismissal, early dismissals with parents coming in and the various other people who may come into the office. Next is the issue with buses that are arriving late in the afternoon for pick up and parents are calling, students being supervised while figuring out how they might get to their next activity, and there is also the issue of students not being picked up on time or a parent not being home in the afternoon and the student being brought back to school. Often someone is voluntarily giving their time because they don't want to see a student upset or a principal may have to cancel a meeting because a student needs to be supervised. There are after school PTA sponsored clubs where parents don't show up on time to pick up their children and you can't leave a 7 year old alone in a building because somebody didn't show up. It is also a big problem if there are after school programs with no access to the phone in the office because the office is locked at 4 p.m. At McKinley there are over 200 students who stay after school three days a week for activities affiliated with Wakeman and the reading and math clubs. Right now those are coordinated between the morning clerk and the social worker who is helping with the clerical work in the afternoon and taking it home to work on at night and on the weekends. Presently, the social worker, school psychologist or Dr. Vail change their plans and stay to accommodate the students. It is really a voluntary issue; contractually we can't obligate people to stay beyond their work day.

Board questions and comments followed regarding how the schools have been managing; do all of the problems get resolved by 4:30 since that is the suggested end time for the clerk; not just being an extra half hour of coverage but coverage from 12:30 to 4:30 to help with paperwork, phones and the

student load; the possibility of shifting the part-time morning clerk to the afternoon or staggering the hours and if coverage is needed for eight hours, then justify it and hire a full-time person. Concern was expressed that this issue was never discussed before and now it appears in the budget. If elementary principals are having an issue with something, it is incumbent that the Board knows about it long before it shows up as a budget item.

#### Capital Improvement Projects-

Board questions and discussion followed regarding the need to prioritize the projects, how much it will cost to test the soil around the oil tanks to get an indication of any contamination, is there a contingency built in if something is found when removing the tanks, concern that our buildings have been outfitted with dual fuel devices and the Town has made a commitment to gas moving forward, and concern if oil becomes much less expensive than gas later on.

Dr. Title stated that dual fuel is still advantageous in the sense that it allows us to have an emergency back up in the event the gas line is disrupted for any period of time.

Board questions and comments continued regarding the Osborn Hill window project, tackling a third PCB window project when there are already two on our plate, the Dwight boilers and Tomlinson façade work that didn't get funded last year and what new information will be provided to make it through this time and why wasn't the Tomlinson floor tile replacement done during the major renovation. There was discussion on the Tomlinson traffic improvement project and a suggestion was made to include the Tomlinson Middle School traffic schematic in the book.

### 3. BREAK – 5 Minutes

#### Medical Insurance-

Dr. Title stated that Mrs. Munsell will walk the Board through the documents that are at their places this evening. While AON could not be at tonight's meeting, they did respond to some questions in writing which are also at Board members' places.

Mrs. Munsell reviewed the Medical Insurance Profit & Loss Summary, which is the same page that is in the budget book but has been color coded. The proposed 2012-2013 net balance is \$1,868,340, which is the same as the IBNR. The budget was built based on the concept of maintaining a balance of two times the IBNR. In order to calculate the IBNR, the most recent IBNR number of \$1,767,755 was adjusted by 5.69%, for an anticipated increase in cost based on the 2010-2011 actual claims and the 2011-2012 projected claims. That is how an IBNR number of \$1,868,340 was arrived at. The target balance to end with on June 30, 2013 is \$3,736,680, which is two times the IBNR. The total expenses (Anthem BC/BC claims, RX claims & Dental claims), money going out from the medical retention fund, is \$24,958,566, which includes \$207,586 for the the Medicare Supplement Retiree Plan, which is a fully insured medical supplement plan that has nothing to do with the claims that AON gives us renewals on. The second page is the renewal projection from AON with all of the numbers shown on the medical retention summary for a total of \$24,750,979. The sub-total of income includes \$6,950,507 from other income revenue such as employee cost share premiums, retiree payments, COBRA, FMLA/LOA, rebates on prescriptions, food service grants, and any other money taken in that goes into the medical retention fund. The proposed beginning balance for 2012-2013 is \$4,928,437, which would be the ending balance from the prior year. The missing piece of this equation is what we need to fund in the budget, \$16,622,772.

Dr. Title stated that the \$3,736,680 balance as of June 30<sup>th</sup> is a projection, which we have historically exceeded. These are projections, not actuals. It is quite possible that number could be higher than that balance at year end. What we end up with will depend on the claims experience.

Mrs. Munsell stated that the other two documents are a list of questions from Board members with answers by AON and a list of definitions that she thought might be helpful to the Board.

Approximately one hour of Board questions and comments followed regarding the Medical Insurance Profit and Loss Statement, the prior year's budget amount, the \$450,000 that was allocated to a

capital project that was to be paid for out of the operating budget and needs to be transferred and the annual health insurance increase amount. Mrs. Munsell stated that the annual health insurance increase budget to budget is 1.8%. Page 59 in the budget book, line 201 Health Insurance Totals, shows the budgeted amount for this year is \$16,012,450; the budgeted amount for next year is \$16,622,772, for an increase of \$610,322.

Board questions and discussion continued on the projected cost by AON, the reason why we are budgeting more than the expected cost that is being projected as an increase, how we were able to use a trend rate of 7% instead of 10% which lowered the budget calculation by approximately \$800,000, keeping the Individual Stop Loss at \$300,000, the difference between 125% of IBNR and 200% of that number and going with 125% versus 200%, the option of drawing down the account by \$1 million which goes against the MOU, the difference between this year's budget number and the proposed expenses, working together with the Town to maintain their AAA rating, being tied to the MOU, keeping more in a reserve account than needed, making a decision based on what is best for the Board of Education, concern this does not serve the Board's financial interests and that it is costing the school district more, not less

Ms. Iacono stated that Mr. Tetreau and Mr. Flynn will address the Board on Tuesday night regarding the MOU. They will explain the expenses that the Town carries on our behalf and the benefits that we receive from having the AAA bond rating.

Board comments and questions continued on the Medical Insurance Profit and Loss Summary funding at 125% versus 200%, carrying more money in our budget to help the Town and our claims experience.

Board questions continued from the last meeting on Tuesday.

Q. Give a breakdown of Dues and Fees for the Board of Ed and Dues and Fees for the Superintendent?

A. Dr. Title stated that the difference in Dues and Fees for the Superintendent is for the Connecticut Superintendent's Network that he has been in for nine years. The dues are \$4,500, which makes the number go up from \$5,000 to \$10,000. The Board of Ed dues are basically CABE.

Q. How much is CES dues and how much is CABE dues?

A. They are broken down in the budget book.

Q. Where are we with the gifted program?

A. We have not done an assessment of the Gifted Program. The program has been in place since September. There will be an assessment of the program but we are not prepared to present one to the Board at this time because we have not had enough experience with the program; and it is not a budget issue, it is a program issue.

Q. Is there any sense of how the Gifted Program is going? A lot of the children don't seem to be getting anything and that is a concern.

A. Dr. Title stated that he will get a mid-year status update, but it is not part of the budget program. In terms of an assessment of the program, it is too early. The Program is being implemented the way it was outlined.

Q. Money has been budgeted for the Gifted Program; how is it being used, and is it allocated the same to every school because the populations at the sites are different?

A. The model assigns a .4 gifted teacher to each elementary school. That is how the model was designed, and at the end of the year if that needs to be tweaked based on experience then we will.

Mrs. Brand stated that she wants to make sure it is budgeted relative to the need not to the building because this is about program.

- Q. The Maintenance Budget-There are roughly 2 million square feet of buildings to maintain and we are spending a little more than \$2 square feet to do that. What are the dollars per square foot for commercial buildings in our region of the country for this type of endeavor? Are we spending more than we should be or less than we should be? We need to be able to demonstrate to the Town that we are doing a good job of maintaining the facilities. Perhaps there are some comps available either through the DRG or some type of commercial real estate study that gives a dollar amount per square foot on the maintenance so we could show the rest of the Town that this is where we would like to be eventually.
- A. There really isn't an industry standard. We could look at other districts, but it is hard to gauge in terms of vintage, type of roofs, etc.

Board discussion followed regarding having some type of framework as to what we should be spending on an annual basis for maintenance of our buildings. The difficulty is that every institution has a different accounting system and codes. Finding a benchmark from other than school districts that perhaps have the same accounting code would be a long search.

- Q. Open Choice-62 students are enrolled between grades 1-12. If they start in first grade at a school are they allowed to stay at that elementary school even if suddenly that one student pushes us to another section?
- A. Yes, they stay.
- Q. Is there a sense of how many students request Fairfield that we are not able to accommodate?
- A. Fairfield does not manage this. It is a regional program and parents apply to CES who administers the program. There are a number of school districts that participate. Each school district says here is where we have openings and CES matches them up. CES would have to tell us if there was excess demand but it might not be demand specific to Fairfield, it may just be demand for the program.
- Q. Would CES be able to tell us if they have had requests for Fairfield in the Open Choice program that they have not been able to fulfill because of the number of slots we gave them?
- A. Parents are not allowed to request one specific town. They put in for Open Choice and are given an offer.
- Q. Pages 150-155, Major Maintenance Projects for 2012-2013 - \$75,000 for Mill Hill to replace classroom millwork and sinks which are the original from the reopening of the school in 1991. Have these been replaced at Holland Hill because it would seem that the ones at Mill Hill are newer than the ones at Holland Hill?
- A. Holland Hill was not done. A study was done of what elementary schools were in the worst condition and it was voted that Mill Hill was the worst at this time.
- Q. Fairfield Woods Middle School Jackson Wing locker replacement-why is this not part of the building project? Want to be sure those are the worst lockers in the district that are being replaced first.
- A. The Building Committee is slowly running out of funds and these are not part of the project to be replaced. They were done in the 1990's, and at that time they didn't rip out the old base and the existing system that was there, they just put lockers back in on top of old tile flooring.
- Q. The Tomlinson Middle School retaining wall \$105,000-Is that being done out of the maintenance budget rather than something that is bonded in capital improvement?
- A. It was right on the fence, \$100,000 is supposed to be the minimum.
- Q. Is the façade repair at Tomlinson eligible for educational funding reimbursement?
- A. No.
- Q. If there were any adjustments made in the start times at any schools, would that result in a more efficient three tier use of buses?

- A. What prevents you from running buses more than one tier or two tiers is if a bus can't go out and do a loop and get back to pick the kids up. We aren't going to go any earlier, so the question is how much later can you go? Our elementary schools already start pretty late, and if you go too much later in the afternoon, you run into way too much darkness. The research project was if we bought ten minutes, what would the return on that investment be? For ten minutes of time \$30,000 maybe. It was not a substantial sum of money. It didn't seem to be worth the disruption and never amounted to enough to put it forward.
- Q. Why do Burr and McKinley, 2 of our newest schools, have 3 custodians each whereas all of the others have fewer than that?
- A. It has to do with square footage. The square footage at Burr and McKinley is in the 71,000 range and normally elementary schools are in the 46,000-60,000 range. Custodians are allocated based on square footage.
- Q. We have almost 44.95 employees funded with grants, are there any concerns about those sources of funding drying up versus the state and federal level.
- A. There is uncertainty on all of them; it is just a question of degree.
- Q. Page 118, High School Class Sizes – what classes would have under 15 students?
- A. The culminating course in a sequence, some AP Classes, and scheduling quirks. There is a short explanation on page 118.
- Q. What subjects get the carry on affect, the end of the sequence? Is it primarily World Language; do you see it in higher math or science?
- A. There are a number of areas. Some sequences such as technical education have small classes; some are limited, for example keyboarding only has 8 keyboards in the room so we are limited to that number; there are a few World Language classes that are small towards the end of the sequence; and we have combined a number of courses that run two together to maximize the amount FTEs we have.
- Q. The possibility of having video streaming between the two high schools so you could have end of sequence World Language classes with eight kids in each class and one teacher from a distance learning prospective. Would like to explore the use of technology to try to help retain and expand the course work that we are doing.
- A. That has potential if there is space.
- Q. How many people do we employ?
- A. 1,488
- Q. What is the breakdown if we had funded the ISF at the AON 125% and another breakdown if funded at MOU 200%?
- A. At 125% \$2,325,425 at 200 % \$3,736,680.
4. Mr. Convertito moved, seconded by Mrs. Kennelly that this meeting of the Board of Education adjourn at 10:43 p.m.

Motion carried: 9:0:0.

Jessica Gerber  
Secretary