

Board of Finance
Marlborough Elementary School - Media Center
March 17, 2016
Budget Workshop Special Meeting
7:00 P.M.

Call to Order

Chairman Knowlton called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Seated were Doug Knowlton, Cliff Denniss, Ken Hjulstrom, Erik Young, and Susan Leser. Alternate Midge Denno was seated for the vacancy.

Public Comments

Joe Asklar, Fire Marshall, 24 Islieb Road, spoke about his health insurance being deleted from the town budget. Mr. Asklar provided the Board with information to explain the confusion. He said he pays 100% of his health insurance with the town. Ms. Leser asked how many hours he works and he provided his calendar, showing the month of March. The Board requested that he put something together that shows the number of hours peryear worked.

John Stimpson, Saner Road, quoted some statistics he heard on the news and read in the newspaper regarding the high taxes Connecticut residents pay. He said the residents cannot afford a 5.4% increase in taxes and Boards need to learn to do more with less. He said the Board of Education asks for too much and he does not know what happens to any surplus. They need to share the sacrifice others have gone through.

Local Board of Education (BOE) Presentation of their Recommended Budget to the Board

Dr. Sklarz, Superintendent, began his presentation by saying that no one budget stands alone. He prides himself on being fiscally responsible. Dr. Sklarz said they have reduced office staff, purchasing textbooks, eliminated the Spanish program and enrichment activities during the difficult years. Now they have brought back a state of the art Spanish program, have more enrichment activities, and all day kindergarten. Dr. Sklarz said that the number one concern of the parents is class size. Enrollment has declined almost 20% in the past five years and the projections are showing the enrollment will continue to decline. Dr. Sklarz said with the education budget being 85% salaries and benefits per union contracts, there is not much room to cut. One misleading slide in the PowerPoint presentation was the history of fund balances the BOE has returned to the town. The amounts may have been correct, but Mr. Denniss pointed out that last year their surplus was around \$110,000, and they only returned \$1,164. The BOE has identified alternative funding sources for cost savings. They have added a \$29,000 facilities contingency fund put together by the health insurance savings, the REAP technology grant and the cafeteria plan savings.

The Superintendent presented the BOE first with a budget with a decrease, and then the BOE decreased it more. Then at their last meeting they voted to go forth with this budget. Their proposed 2016/2017 budget is \$7,422,854, which is a \$26,587 increase or a .36% tax impact. Mr. Denniss asked Dr. Sklarz if this budget has over \$100,000 worth of additional spending. This budget has fewer teachers and last year's budget had \$71,000 for an out placed child that they did not need and now that money is not included in the proposed budget either.

Ms. Denno asked how the CNR Committee decided not to put in the capital item requested. Mr. Shea responded that the BOS made the final recommendations. The BOS felt that with a 5.4% increase, they would only fund bridge culverts, roads, and a dump truck. The requested new phone system is something the BOS is looking into to include the school, senior center, library and town hall. When questioned, Dr. Sklarz said that the Medicaid money the school receives is not in the budget as revenue anywhere because they don't know how much they will receive. The REAP grant is for \$25,000 and they have to use that for achievement gap which is accomplished through the after school program.

Budget Deliberations

After the BOE left, the BOF began discussing the town budget and asked the BOS questions. Mr. Denniss asked which figure is correct for the Registrar's. One place it shows an increase and in another their salaries remain the same. First Selectman Traversa said that they tried to give all the employees the same raise as the union employees, but that she would check on it. There was also an incorrect number within the library budget. Ms. Traversa will also check on that number. Mr. Hjulstrom stated that he would like to see the current contracts for the oil and diesel. He is interested in the terms of the contracts. Field maintenance went down in the proposed budget, and that is most likely due to no longer having the Moose Club field available for use. The Board asked the BOS to look into having one Resident State Trooper with more constable hours to compare with the cost for two Troopers. With the next union negotiations not until 2018, the BOF asked if \$75,000 is really needed for legal fees. Ms. Traversa said there is Phase 3 for the sewer system, major road work, and the development of the foreclosed properties, all that will require legal services. The Board asked if there would be leftover funds from the snow removal line item. Ms. Traversa said that she checked with other towns, such as Colchester, and we have used as much as they have, even though we have half as much road to cover.

Mr. Denniss told the Board that the RHAM BOE has their budget at a .26% decrease. At their last meeting, the regional BOE voted to include \$450,000 as a separate item to vote on. RHAM will present their budget to the BOF on 3/24/16.

Ms. Leser asked the First Selectman to figure out the bond for the school and add it to their proposed budget to figure out the real cost of education per pupil. There was a minor discussion about whether that is included in other school budgets when the state figures per pupil expenditures. Ms. Leser also mentioned that maybe the elected officials should have a salary freeze.

Correspondence

Chairman Knowlton said he emailed the following to the Board:

Mill rate sheet, revenue sheet, updated contact list, emails from the First Selectman, a memo from a citizen regarding the Fire Marshall's health insurance issue, and a list of possible state cuts.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Hjulstrom made a motion, seconded by Ms. Leser, to approve the minutes from the March 9, 2016 regular meeting with the following corrections:

Page 2, the 6th sentence should read "The general fund was *partially* funded from the surplus funds from the Boards of Education."

Page 4, under Local BOE, the last sentence should say **Mr. Denniss**, not the BOF, believes the BOE will All voted in favor.

Public Comments

None

Adjournment

Ms. Leser made a motion, seconded by Ms. Denno, to adjourn at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Rihm
Board Clerk