

Marlborough Board of Education
Special Meeting
April 14, 2016
Elmer Thienes-Mary Hall Elementary School Library/Media Center

1. Call to Order

Chairman Ruth Kelly called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

BOE Members Present:

Present and seated were, Ruth Kelly, Wes Skorski, Betty O'Brien, Louise Concodello, Theresa Brysgel, Susan Rapelye, Mimi LaPoint, and Patrick Pabouet.

Administration Present:

Dr. David Sklarz, Superintendent
Dan White, Principal
Kim Kelley, Vice Principal
Holly Maiorano, Director of Special Services

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Comments

Dave Porteous, 15 Edstrom Road, distributed to board members a "Letter to the Editor" that he has submitted to the Rivereast along with information from the State Department of Education on Net Current Expenditures per Pupil . Mr. Porteous stated that this data shows that all 169 towns in Connecticut reflect the educational costs of grades pre-k through 12. He noted that it also shows that Marlborough is ranked 166 out of the 169 towns. Mr. Porteous explained that the data is definitive and useful in comparing the educational costs of one town to another. He noted that the data excludes reimbursable educational transportation expenses, tuition, revenue, capital expenditures for land, buildings and equipment and debt service.

LeeAnn Eppinger, 139 Edstrom Road, stated that she is disappointed in the budget cuts in losing two teaching positions and that is not a recipe for success either for students or teachers. She said she is worried about people not supporting education.

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Rich Storrs, 6 Stage Harbor Road, said the Board of Education is facing the difficult task of deciding where to make budget reductions and encouraged board members to listen to and consider the proposed recommendations by Dr. Sklarz, Mr. White and Mrs. Kelley.

4. Discussion and Possible Action RE: Proposed FY 2016-2017 Education Budget

Dr. Sklarz made a presentation to the Board on the proposed \$200,000 in budget reductions that administration was recommending. He reviewed the guiding principles board members should use as a yardstick in making decisions. Dr. Sklarz discussed each proposed reduction at length with impact statements as to how teaching and learning would be affected. Dr. Sklarz noted that taking an additional \$200,000 in budget cuts results in a -2.34% budget decrease. The intended and unintended consequences of the budget reductions were noted.

MOTION #1 by Wes Skorski , seconded by Theresa Brysgel, to reduce the AHM Support line item 320 by \$22,000.

After discussion, the motion was withdrawn.

Board members reviewed and discussed at length the proposed budget reductions that included eliminating a 1.0 FTE teaching position, reducing the Pre-K teaching position to a 0.8 FTE, reducing curriculum revision from \$5,000 to \$2,500, restructuring an administrative assistant position, eliminating the school office receptionist position, reducing BOE legal fees, reducing the staff development budget, reducing estimated electric costs, reducing the facilities contingency account, reducing magnet school tuitions from 6 to 5, reducing instructional supplies, reducing computer supplies, reducing custodial supplies, eliminating student iPads, reducing teacher laptops from 6 to 5 and eliminating 2 Epson projectors. The related services positions of school psychologists, speech/language pathologist, reading specialists, Spanish, library/media specialist, physical education, art and music were also reviewed and discussed. Other budget reduction alternatives were considered in place of eliminating the additional 1.0FTE teaching position.

MOTION #2 by Betty O'Brien, seconded by Pat Pabouet and Louise Concodello, to accept the recommended budget cuts made by the administration.

VOTE: **In favor:** Betty O'Brien, Ruth Kelly, Louise Concodello, Sue Rapelye and Pat Pabouet;
Opposed: Theresa Brysgel; **Abstained:** Wes Skorski and Mimi LaPoint;
MOTION CARRIED

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5. Public Comments

A resident of 23 Hickory Road noted that Hebron has a pre-school program that charges students and asked if this is something Marlborough should consider doing in order to bring revenue in to the school.

Amy Traversa, 21 Jones Hollow Road, speaking as First Selectman, stated that she took offense to statements made by board members that the Board of Selectmen and Finance took pleasure in reducing the education budget. She noted that the education budget was reduced by the \$200,000 when it was thought that the state ECS (Education Cost Sharing) funding was going to be reduced by \$33,000 but have just learned within the past day that ECS funding will be reduced even further to \$137,000. Ms. Traversa stated that these are dire economic times and will continue to be for several years.

Dave Porteous, 15 Edstrom Road, extended his thanks to the school administration for all the hard work that went into putting the budget recommendations together. He noted that financial and educational risks were taken. Mr. Porteous said that if Marlborough does not have a quality school system that property values will go down and that the public should know that there are risks to doing this. He reminded everyone that Marlborough is near the bottom in spending per pupil for both Marlborough Elementary School and Region 8. He said that he sees the future as full of challenges, not disasters, and that he does not believe that the state is in a dire economic situation.

Ken Hjulstrom, 181 South Main Street, a member of the Board of Finance but speaking as an individual, said that the Board of Finance met last week and did speak about the ECS and MRSA (Municipal Revenue Sharing Account) funding cuts. He said that if the cuts in state funding stand, the Board of Finance realizes the budget that was approved will run in a deficit. He stated that the Board of Finance is faced with the choices of either leaving the budget the way it is and hope that any deficit can be made up, increasing taxes or making further budget cuts.

Midge Denno, 417 Jones Hollow Road, said she hopes that people will come out on April 25th to the Public Budget Hearing and voice their opinions. She noted that it is a balancing act and that the needs of everyone in town have to be taken into account. Ms. Denno reiterated what Cliff Denniss had suggested at the Board of Finance meeting that people write State Senator Cathy Osten and State Representative Gayle Mulligan regarding the funding cuts. She stated that the Board of Finance is trying to do the best they can.

Pam Farrington, 95 Jerry Daniels Road, thanked the Board of Education for the time they spent in trying to retain a classroom teacher and keep class sizes down. She stated that she does not

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think that the town is in a dire economic state noting that other surrounding towns are also in similar situations but that she does not see any of them with a -2.34% budget decrease. She asked that the Board relook at the class size guidelines they established and update them. She said that she hopes people come out to the Public Hearing on April 25th and voice their opinions.

Rich Storrs, 6 Stage Harbor Road, stated that as he has said to the Board of Finance on multiple occasions, he appreciates what the board does. He said that some important information was received tonight from the Board of Education as to the roles and responsibilities of some positions within the school. Mr. Storrs noted that there is a lot of information being scattered across town either at the park, "Dunkin" or on line that is not necessarily based in reality. He stated that it is important that everyone in the community from students to parents to elected officials deal in the facts and information that is accurate. He noted that it is disappointing to him that his 4th grader was born into these economic times when programs keep being trimmed and cut and does not think it is fair to have to explain this to his child.

6. Adjournment

MOTION #3: by Louise Concodello to adjourn meeting at 9:13 p.m. and seconded by Betty O'Brien.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS, motion carried

Respectfully submitted,

Cherie Celmer