

BUDGET MEETING OF THE GREENWICH BOARD OF EDUCATION

DATE: November 20, 2007, 7:00 p.m.

PLACE: Cos Cob School

PRESENT:

Board: Mrs. Leslie Moriarty, Vice-Chairman
Mrs. Nancy Weissler, Secretary
Mr. Steven B. Anderson
Mr. Michael C. Bodson
Mr. Jonathan Cohen
Mrs. Marianna Ponns Cohen
Dr. Susan S. Ellis
Ms. Natalie Queen

Administration:

Dr. Betty J. Sternberg, Superintendent of Schools
Mrs. Kathleen Greider, Deputy Superintendent
Mr. John Curtin, Asst. Superintendent
Dr. Susan Wallerstein, Asst. Superintendent
Dr. Ellen Flanagan, Director, Human Resources
Ms. Mary P. Forde, Director, Pupil Personnel Services
Mr. Christopher Winters, Director of Curriculum & Instruction
Ms. Kim Eves, Director, Communications
Mr. Richard Calcavecchio, Director of Budget

Other: Mrs. Celia Fernandez, Mrs. Alicia Budkins, Ms. Gaetane Francis, Glenville School; Mrs. Anna Saras, Parkway School, Mrs. Geri Fleming, Cos Cob School; Ms. Jamie Clarke, Greenwich High School; Mr. Andrew Shaw, Greenwich Time, Mr. Ken Borsuk, Greenwich Post and various members of the public.

The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Moriarty, Vice Chairman, at 7:05 p.m. Mrs. Carmella Budkins, Town Clerk, was present to swear in the newly elected Board members: Mr. Michael C. Bodson, Mr. Jonathan Cohen, Mrs. Marianna Ponns Cohen, and Ms. Natalie Queen.

Discussion of Glenville Relocation Options

Dr. Sternberg and Dr. Wallerstein presented information on the possible options for the relocation of Glenville School students given the delays in the Hamilton Avenue School construction project. The Hamilton Avenue Building Committee has recently hired URS to provide it with an updated timeline for the completion of the school construction. Board members asked a number of questions: In response to a question as to how many students had opted to transfer to another school this year, Dr. Sternberg indicated that no families had availed themselves of that option. In response to questions about the modulars, Dr. Wallerstein indicated that the timeline for their installation includes Town approvals and site work and that the shortest lease period is six months. However, she noted that there would be no guaranty that even if this timeline were followed, that the modulars would be available for the start of the 2008-2009 school year. In response to another question, Dr. Sternberg indicated that corrective action had been taken to fix the roof, security, and plumbing problems at Glenville and that the School meets all the health and safety codes. Mr. Bodson, who is on the Hamilton Avenue School Committee, noted that it would be imperative for Worth, the construction company on the project, to adhere to the schedule developed by URS to ensure the successful completion of the project

MOTION: It was moved by Mrs. Weissler and seconded by Mr. Bodson to limit the time for speakers to two minutes.

VOTE: 8 in favor, none opposed MOTION CARRIED

Public Hearing

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| Alicia Budkins and Celia Fernandez | Glenville School PTA Co-Presidents, spoke on the need to address the relocation options for the School; they noted new problems with leaks and the HVAC system. |
| Anna Saras | Parkway parent, spoke on the budget, indicating that she believes that there is a wide variance in the per school, per pupil spending, and called for greater transparency in budget presentation. She also expressed concern about student-based resource allocation. |
| Gaetane Francis more | Glenville parent, spoke on the budget, advocating for the funding of elementary school math coaches to provide challenge for higher level students. |
| Gerri Fleming | Cos Cob parent, spoke on the critical nature of reading instruction and the need for a research-based curriculum |

that is taught systematically.

Jamie Clarke
noted that
much of what is

GHS parent, spoke in favor of Smart Boards, but
the use of technology at GHS is limited and
available is not in good repair.

Update on the Board of Education Budget for 2008-2009

Dr. Sternberg presented an update on the Board of Education Budget for 2008-2009. She noted that there had been an error in calculating the extra days for GEA and GOSA employees. As a result, the level services budget guideline for 2008-2009, assuming 8,929 students, needed to be revised down from \$125,469,831 to \$124,990,887. In response to the Board mandate to keep the 2008-2009 budget within the guideline, Dr. Sternberg proposed the following adjustments to revise the budget to \$124,989,846: \$100,000 decrease in Line 199 for a lower savings for long-term subs; \$23,650 to correct a data entry error; \$42,000 to eliminate the proposed increase in elementary school secretarial coverage; \$12,000 to eliminate the proposed lead principal at the elementary school level; and \$11,600 to reduce the number of days allocated for peer leadership at GHS.

In response to Board questions, Mr. Calcavecchio indicated that as a result of this change, the proposed net cost for long-term subs would be \$354,000, consistent with the \$340,000 budgeted for 2007-2008.

Board Discussion of the 2008-2009 Budget

The following reflects the Board's questions and comments by subject area:

Technology:

Smart Boards:

- Timing: Under the proposed plan, one quarter of Grades 3-12 classrooms would receive the Smart Boards per year for the next four years, resulting in a total expenditure of \$1.2 million
- Usage of current installed base: A Board member asked the Administration to provide information about the usage of the current installed base and the staff development time required to develop proficiency. The Administration indicated that there has been significant progress in developing software applications for Smart Boards that teachers can access
- Prioritization: A Board member asked the Administration to provide further rationale for the recommendation to allocate \$1.2 million to this initiative as opposed to first increasing student and teacher skills and proficiency in the use of technology with possibly greater applicability

Computers:

- Leasing plan: In response to a Board member question about the plan to lease, as opposed to buy, computers, the Administration indicated that it had the following benefits: 1) eliminated the waste disposal problem; 2) provided flexibility and minimized the obsolescence risk; and 3) could be structured with fairly level lease payments.

Pre-School :

- Enrollment forecast: The GPS adds students to the program throughout the year as many parents prefer to transition their special needs children from the Birth to 3 program upon turning 3.
- Results: Board members asked the administration to provide comparative achievement results for those students who had attended the GPS preschool and who were still in the District.

Consultants:

- Not other classified: Board members asked for a breakdown of the proposed \$784,000 for consultants in this category and a comparison with the prior year.
- Medical: The proposed budget for medical consultants, consisting of private nurses, OT and PT, is \$1,029,558 vs. the \$825,659 budgeted for 2007-2008. The increase reflects a reduction in State excess cost reimbursement and increases in the cost of OT, PT, and private nurses.

Achievement:

- Aggregate spending by academic program: A Board member asked for a roll-up of spending for each of the major academic programs and a comparison with the prior year.
- Supplemental programs: Spending for the seven schools that have received funding this year would be level in the proposed budget; however, the budget includes a proposed allocation of an additional \$81,000 to the remaining eight schools based on the extent to which their students did not reach goal on the standardized tests. In response to a Board member's question about the adequacy of the amount for students at GHS, the Administration indicated that GHS has existing programs and the plan is to provide a deliberate rollout.
- Current supplemental programs: The Administration indicated that programs vary by school, reflecting the differing needs of each school's student population;

however, the District is collecting data to assess the effectiveness of the various programs and to share best practices. A Board member raised the question as to the difficulty in attributing results to a particular program given the multiple initiatives under way in the district.

Professional Development:

- Effectiveness of current programs: In response to a question about how the District assesses the effectiveness of the consultants used in professional development, the Administration indicated that they are first exposing the principals to several leadership models before making the determination as to which one to continue.

Assessments:

- Different types of assessments: Board members asked for a more detailed explanation. The Administration indicated that as part of the curriculum review process for certain academic areas, some additional summative and benchmark assessments will be developed districtwide. The Administration indicated that the effective use of formative assessments is a critical underpinning of academic achievement and that teachers will receive training in this and will be evaluated in their use of it as part of the TEPD. The development of formative assessments is expected to be an ongoing process. A Board member suggested that the Board should revisit the amount of time allocated to testing as part of the curriculum review.

Secondary School Review:

- Coordination with the State initiative: Dr. Sternberg noted that the State has convened its own review of secondary education and that the Greenwich Secondary Review Task Force will be cognizant of that initiative. One Board member noted the urgency of this Review and the importance of reviewing the middle school and high school programs together.

Special Education:

- Trends in disability percentages: In response to Board questions about the changes in the percentage of identified students, Ms. Forde replied that the changes in Greenwich mirror those at the national level and that there has been an increase in higher acuity cases. She explained that identification is based on Federal government criteria and that students on the autism spectrum are often classified as having a speech impairment.
- Staffing model: Ms. Forde indicated that she thought that the staffing model met the needs of the students and was approximately correct. She noted that retention of paraprofessionals continues to be a problem.
- Project Evolve: Ms. Forde indicated that this program applies to special education students with severe disabilities. The five schools that have

participated so far in the program have made the decision to reallocate some of their paraprofessional support for special education teachers.

- Settlements: The budget includes projected costs for settlements.

MOTION: It was moved by Dr. Ellis and seconded by Mr. Cohen to extend the meeting a half hour.

VOTE: 8 in favor, none opposed

MOTION CARRIED

Staffing:

- Intervention specialist: Job description will be available for next Budget meeting.
- Consultant for Tiers II and III Reading Program: The Administration indicated that they planned to hire a consultant to provide the necessary expertise and to facilitate communication among the staff groups.
- Elementary school math coaches: The Administration indicated that that it intended to retrain building staff coaches, many of which come from literacy backgrounds, to provide supplemental help, particularly in differentiation, for Every Day Math.
- Administrator staffing levels: In response to questions as to why Greenwich's levels in this area are higher than comparable districts, the Administration cited: 1) the smaller neighborhood schools, each of which has an assistant principal, and 2) the five housemasters at GHS.
- Retention: The administration was asked for comparable turnover information for other districts.
- Summer guidance staffing: Several Board members indicated that they did not think it was fair to ask the guidance counselors to work in the summer in exchange for a "comp" day during the school year.

Other:

- Transportation expense: Board members asked for the data on incremental transportation expense to support the magnet program.
- Breakdown of the budget by school: Mrs. Cohen asked the Administration to provide a breakdown of the budget by school because she thought it would provide greater transparency and ensure greater accountability. Several Board members responded that under the Budget ends and limitations adopted in

June, the Board decided that a breakdown by school would not be meaningful because the numbers per school vary widely by 1) the seniority of the staff and 2) the profile of the students (e.g., percentage of special education, ESL, ALP students). It was agreed by the Board that Mrs. Weissler would follow up with Mrs. Cohen on this information request.

- Proposed child care program: The Administration stated that the proposed plan is to staff this internally; it indicated that no other Town departments were willing to take responsibility for the program

Upon motion duly made Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mrs. Weissler, the meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Weissler
Secretary