

BUDGET MEETING OF THE GREENWICH BOARD OF EDUCATION

DATE: December 4, 2007, 7:00 p.m.

PLACE: Cos Cob School

PRESENT:

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

Administration:

Dr. Betty J. Sternberg, Superintendent of Schools
Mrs. Kathleen Greider, Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Susan Wallerstein, Asst. Superintendent
Mr. John Curtin, Asst. Superintendent
Ms. Mary P. Forde, Director, Pupil Personnel Services
Ms. Kim Eves, Director, Communications
Mr. Richard Calcavecchio, Director of Budget
Mr. Anthony Byrne, Director of Facilities

Other: Mrs. Julie Faryniarz, Mrs. M. J. Foti, PTA Council; Mrs. Laurie Heiss Grealy, Greenwich High School; Mrs. Nancy Chapin, Mrs. Bianca Cortlan-Cox, ALP program; Mrs. Cathy Delehanty, GEA/ Mrs. Alison Burns, Mrs. Kelly Schnabel, Parkway School; Mrs. Genevieve Krob, FHSPA; Mr. Andrew Shaw, Greenwich Time, Mr. Ken Borsuk, Greenwich Post, Ms. Anne Semmes, Greenwich Citizen, and various members of the public. An attendance list is on file in the Board Office.

The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Weissler, Chairman at 7:00 p.m.

There was no one who signed up and wished to address the Board.

Further Presentation on the Board of Education Budget for 2008-2009

The budget currently proposed by the Superintendent totals \$124,989,846, which represents a 4.78% increase over the 2007-2008 budget and is within BET guidelines. Mrs. Weissler expressed the Board's thanks to the Administration for their rapid and thorough turnaround to our second round of submitted questions.

Board members' questions and concerns were focused around:

Lead Principal

- 1) the classification of this position has changed since the initial budget – clarification was provided by Mrs. Greider that the Lead Principal would support our 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year principals.
- 2) impact on the individual school that the Lead Principal would come from. Mrs. Greider stressed that this additional role would only result in the Lead Principal being away 10% of the time and that Mrs. Greider would only select a Principal that already has a strong leadership team in place.
- 3) concern about creating an additional layer of reporting
There was broad agreement that Professional Development and Administrative Growth was very important at the Principal level.

Long Term Substitutes

There was discussion about the ability to create more certainty around the salary savings account. Mr. Calcavecchio impressed upon the Board that all components of the salary savings line are quantified to the best level possible but that the components of this account are high risk and hard to qualify given their volatile nature.

Special Education settlements

- 1) discussion centered on how to put in more consistent controls and how the cost / benefit decisions are arrived at. Ms. Forde provided insight into the factors that help her manage the risk.

GMEA staffing variances

Dr. Flanagan stated that there is a consistent staffing model that is used across all schools. Certain elementary schools may qualify for additional staffing when the student count goes over 400 (school gets an extra 16 hour / week Administrative Staff Assistant) and over 500 (the 16 hours goes to 20)

Assessment of Pre-K Program

Numerous questions focused on how we assess the success of our Pre-K system. Ms. Forde and Mr. Curtin stated that they are currently tracking 180 out of 390 Pre-K graduates. Efforts are focusing on creating the ability to better norm the evaluation observations. Funds are being provided in this budget to allow Mr. Curtin to collect better data and analyze the results.

Consultants

Concerns and questions were raised about the increased use of consultants, the ability (or lack thereof) to find the needed abilities in-house, the desire to bring in those “lighthouse” experts that provide national and international scope, and the view that money spent on consultants takes money away from student funding. Consensus, summarized by Mrs. Weissler, was to have Dr. Sternberg prioritize the current Consultants’ Fees in Object Codes 144 and 149.

Staffing

Learning Facilitators: Concern was expressed that the days funded in this position were mutually cut back to 3 days from 7 days in the recently concluded GEA negotiation and that this budget puts extra Learning Facilitator days back in. Mrs. Greider provided insight into the need to support various educational areas that are currently without a Program Head.

Paraprofessionals: Concerns were raised about the increase in staffing in the Special Ed area. Ms. Forde discussed the decline in the number of children in this area but that there is a higher level of complexities for those still in Special Ed. She noted that the application of staffing is done by strict ratio.

Administrators: Questions focused on how the Administrators are deployed and how these costs are broken out.

Programs

Childcare: Questions and concerns focused on the currently planned location at Parkway, the need to put the childcare employees on our Table of Organization and administrative time needed to start the program. Board members expressed strong support for the revenue-neutral childcare program and encouraged the Administration to position and size the program so that it has the highest chance of success.

Adult Learning Program: Concerns expressed about why we are running two different models. Mrs. Greider reported that 2008-2009 will be the year to determine the best model.

Continuing Education: continued questions and concerns about our need and ability to run this in a revenue-neutral pattern.

Smartboards

Fran Kompar, Program Coordinator of Media, provided additional insight of the planned implementation and answered Board questions pertaining to teacher training, usage and efficiency, compatibility with current technology and the ability for seamless communications across all electronic mediums.

Centralized Residency Verification

Concerns were expressed about the current decentralized student registration and residency verification process. Views were expressed by various Board members that a move to centralized residency verification could provide a more constant, consistent residency verification process and allow the Administration to detect illegal students, trends and adjustment needs earlier. Mr. Curtin provided information that numerous school districts currently use a centralized process to verify residency, which then allows the students to register at their local school.

MOTION: It was moved by Mr. Bodson and seconded by Mr. Cohen to extend the meeting by 15 minutes.

VOTE 7 in favor, Mrs. Moriarty opposed MOTION CARRIED

Centralized Residency Verification (continued)

Mr. Curtin stated that centralized residency verification would probably require the allocation of 1 to 1.5 FTE staff members at Havemeyer. Additional Board comments focused on the ability to show that strong, accurate processes are in place and that illegal residency claims are being properly investigated.

Summation:

Mrs. Weissler noted that our issues raised tonight had been documented by Dr. Wallerstein and would be emailed out to Board members. Dr. Sternberg noted that the Administration would be working to address the areas of concern expressed tonight and would provide additional information before the next budget discussion.

Upon motion duly made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Ms. Queen, the meeting was adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Anderson
Secretary