

Please note: these minutes are in draft form and not yet approved by the BoE

A Budget Hearing took place on Monday, April 5, 2010 at 6:00 pm in the library of Nonnewaug High School, 5 Minortown Road, Woodbury, CT.

Present: Board of Education Chair Monica Gati and Board Members Scott Baider, Linda Bulvanoski, Deborah Corsico, Charles Cosgriff, Carla Juhas, Stephen Paluskas and Stephen Sordi; also, Superintendent of Schools Robert D. Cronin, Ph.D., Director of Finance/Operations Jay Hubelbank; Woodbury Town Moderator Louis DeLuca

Audience Members: Principals Lori Ferreira, Dawn Hochsprung, Alice Jones, and Melinda McKenna; School Social Workers Sharon Gomes, Doriene Wester and Amy Williams; Director of Buildings/Grounds Michael Molzon; three members of the press and approximately twenty members of the community.

I. Call to Order

Ms. Gati called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm

II. Appointment of Moderator

Ms. Gati requested a *motion to appoint Mr. DeLuca moderator of the hearing.*

Mr. Paluskas entered the motion, seconded by Mr. Baider.

Motion carried 7-0. (Ms. Corsico had not yet arrived)

III. Appointment of Meeting Clerk by the Moderator

Mr. DeLuca appointed Debra Carlton meeting clerk.

IV. Call of the Meeting

Mr. DeLuca read the following call:

To present and receive questions about the Regional School District 14 Board of Education's proposed budget for 2010-2011 in the amount of \$29,840,482

V. Presentation of the Region 14 Budget for the 2010-2011 School Year

Mr. DeLuca called on Dr. Cronin to present the budget.

Dr. Cronin reviewed assumptions established prior to developing the budget. He explained that, in conversations with town officials, it was noted that the economic conditions had not improved and that this was the first "given" in developing the school budget. Priorities for the Region are that all contractual obligations be fulfilled, teaching and learning remain the focus, existing programs be maintained if successful, and continuous improvement remain the goal. He highlighted the use of content area coordinators, which replace the director of curriculum position, and the data administrator position, which replaces the technology coordinator and system analyst positions. He noted plans for purchasing new Algebra I textbooks.

Dr. Cronin called on Mr. Hubelbank to explain the details of the budget. Mr. Hubelbank reminded the audience that enrollment drives staffing, and that staffing drives the budget. He provided information on current and projected class sizes for all schools. He directed the audience to pp. 9-10 of the budget packet, which accounted for staffing changes next year. He referred to p. 7 of the budget, which compares Region 14's proposed percentage increase to those of surrounding towns. He covered the expenditure summary on p. 2 of the packet, and on p. 15 explained certified and classified salary groups as well as changes resulting from insurance increases. He covered costs for purchased services, instructional and non-instructional, details of capital outlay described on p. 22, and new staff requests on p. 24. He concluded by explaining revenue received and how this would offset the towns' contributions to the budget.

VI. Public Comment

Mr. DeLuca invited comment from the audience.

Art McNally, Woodbury, noted appreciatively that Dr. Cronin's and Mr. Hubelbank's salaries had been held; however, he was distressed to see increases to the salaries of the Director of Special Services, as well as the Principals and Assistant Principals. He asked if there had been any success on freezes for any other groups.

Mr. Hubelbank reminded him that all administrators had taken a freeze for the current year, and said that the Superintendent is waiting to hear back from the teachers group.

Mr. McNally recalled that the Dean of Students/AD position was a teaching position new last year and funded through the general fund. It seems to him that the Region is adding administrators, whereas the assistant principal used to handle discipline.

Mr. Hubelbank explained that the AD position has been in the budget for years at 0.4 and that this past year the 0.6 Dean of Students portion was added. He outlined savings realized in shifting this position into the administrators group, as opposed to paying for extra days in the summer. Additional savings have been accomplished by eliminating the systems analyst and having the data administrator assume those duties. The combined savings for these two changes is over \$7000.

Ms. Bulvanoski added her view that the high school administrators have a large number of teachers to evaluate. Adding another administrator with an (092) certification enables them to more reasonably divide their evaluation responsibilities.

Dr. Cronin added that one of the things he's tried to accomplish over the years is to reduce the number of administrators in the central office and put more of them in the schools working with students and staff.

Duncan McDougal, Woodbury, distributed a letter to the Board which he also read.

Dr. Cronin attempted to explain to Mr. McDougal that his letter contained statements that are inaccurate, but Mr. McDougal dismissed this as only Dr. Cronin's opinion.

Tom Arras, Woodbury, asked if the request to the teachers was a formal request. Ms. Gati responded that it was. Mr. Arras referenced student numbers on pp. 5 and 27 which he did not feel agree as they do not include vo-ag students. He cited two cost-per-student figures, \$13,970 and \$14,244, and suggested a 1.96% increase per student in spite of a decrease in the overall number of students.

Lynn Frederick, Woodbury, asked if Dr. Cronin and Mr. Hubelbank would consider freezing their salaries again this year, since “people are struggling all over the place.” She noted higher costs for transportation and Mr. Hubelbank explained the reasons for those increases.

Ernest Werner, Woodbury, asked for more elaboration on stimulus funds, as far as how much money is being used for what.

Mr. Hubelbank reviewed a one-year SPED position that was funded to avoid losing the money that was available.

Dr. Cronin explained that stimulus money was received late in the year and came with the condition that it be used to supplement current programs, not supplant programs.

Mr. Werner expressed worry that stimulus money is like a carrot to entice the schools to start up new programs that they will later have to fund; he believes the schools get railroaded into this situation.

Dr. Cronin said his aim was to look at all programs and to prioritize the value of each.

Ms. Corsico added that Dr. Cronin has effectively done this all along – he has cut out what is not working and built upon what does.

Mr. McDougal said he feels stimulus money should be used for staffing, not programs. He is concerned that we are making the system bigger.

Candace DeFelice, Woodbury, offered her thanks to the Board and Dr. Cronin. The Boards of Finance had asked for a flat budget and this, she said, comes as close to that as you can get. She noted the smart decisions that are reflected in the budget.

VII. Adjournment

Hearing no further comment, Mr. DeLuca adjourned the meeting at 6:55 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra W. Carlton
Meeting Clerk