



**TORRINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING
Tuesday, May 10, 2016
THS Little Theater- 50 Major Besse Drive**

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Fiona Cappabianca, Chair; Ellen Hoehne; Bill Knight; Jim Lamoin; Armand Maniccia; Jessica Richardson; Daniel Thibault; Kenneth P. Traub; Peter Vergaro

Administration: Dave Bascetta, Director of Facilities; Joe Campolieta, Director of Human Resources; Jerry Domanico, Director of Business Services; Susan M. Lubomski, Assistant Superintendent; Lynda T. Reitman, Interim Superintendent

Absent: Joanne Brogis and Mayor Carbone

SCHOOL/COMMUNITY SESSION

The Chair outlined the purpose and rules of the School/Community Session.

There were sixteen speakers who spoke regarding the potential closure of Southwest School and the budget.

DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED BUDGET

The Chair addressed some of the questions that were raised during public comment.

Ms. Reitman stated would like to suggest to the BOF we would be allowed 2.5% this year and to commit to a 0% increase for 2017-2018,

Mr. Domanico spoke on the cost of insurance premiums. It is proposed to only fund insurance at 105%, this would need to be approved by the Board of Finance. We are going into the second year of the HSA, traditionally in the second year, you do see more savings. One of the problems we have is the number of large claims. We don't want to be in a position where we can't pay for the health insurance claims that are coming through. This is a good midpoint where it won't completely deplete the health insurance fund.

Mr. Traub stated that health insurance is supposed to be financed at 120%. We've never been able to get the Board of Finance to approved funding at 105%. We are depending on money that is out of our control.

Ms. Lubomski spoke on moving our Pre-K coordinator into IDEA, by doing that we are saving \$57,017 by taking it out of the general budget. Our IDEA funds along with our Title 1 funds have been fairly consistent. There hasn't been any indication that those would change.

Ms. Lubomski spoke on Literacy and Numeracy staffing.

Mr. Campolieta spoke on the proposal to eliminate one paraprofessional position from each elementary school for a total of five (5).

Mr. Vergaro questioned why we hire paraprofessionals, we only hire them if they need to be hired due to an IEP.

Ms. Reitman stated that one of the first things we want to start looking at is how are we utilizing our Special Education staff. At present, it's the only bargaining unit we have not taken any cuts from. We don't have any teachers or custodians left to take.

Mr. Domanico spoke on an Early Retirement Incentive. Essentially, three year incentive, would offer to those staff who are not eligible for Medicaid- health insurance, district would pay the cost up to \$10,000. For those Medicaid eligible, incentive of \$7500 to 403(b) plan. There cannot be a cash pay-out, makes all benefits under the incentive taxable. There is a stipulation that in offering this plan the Board is not going to offer another plan until this one runs out in three years.

The Chair stated that it would need to be 20 teachers to be offered.

Ms. Reitman spoke on the cuts we would need to make to get to zero. If we are told we must get to zero, there is not another place we can find a million dollars other than closing a school. We know that trying to close a school between now and September is nearly impossible, if we want to do it well and not have an impact on our community.

Ms. Lubomski spoke about Option A- closing just East school and not repurposing it. Option B- close East School and repurpose it for Central Office, Alternative Ed and some of our Pre-K. Option C- close Southwest School and repurpose for Central Office.

Mr. Bascetta stated that vacating East School by June 30th isn't going to happen so there are going to be expenses into the next fiscal year. Repurposing East School we would have a space build out (remodeling), moving expenses, unemployment, communications and bussing (3-4 additional busses).

Mr. Lamoin questioned what percentage of the bond do we have to payback for Southwest? Mr. Bascetta stated if you repurpose the school as an admin building and keep half of the building as an educational piece we would not be penalized.

Mr. Bascetta stated that the capacity of Southwest is roughly 350 max, East School capacity is about 500.

Ms. Reitman stated didn't feel there would be significant savings on developing a Transitions program. It would require that we would put some money upfront in

developing the program, we need transportation, space, staff, etc. There is no guarantee that we would bring all those students back.

Ms. Lubomski spoke on Pre-K efficiencies, we really need our Special Ed Director to come in and see what our needs are.

Mr. Bascetta spoke on the removal of Community Programs such as the FRC program, located at Vogel School- it is grant funded that does occupy one classroom and an office. It does offer support for 60-80 families down there. It is mandated that we offer that space in an elementary school to offer that program. Other than the space, there is no cost to the district. The other program is the Dental Program (averages roughly 10 days at 6 different schools) the space that they require is generally a spare room with a sink, nothing that is draining our system. School Readiness program is not in our facility, other than minimal paperwork, doesn't cost the district. Community Family Literacy center has been moved, there is no impact during the day.

Mr. Domanico spoke on the Protected Harbor E-Rate Program. E-rate online contacted us in regards to the 470 we posted for this. Typically, they don't come out and meet with districts. They have a great number of concerns over this. The first issue is, it will not be the savings that we are being projected. Essentially maintenance is not e-rate eligible. The only things that can be included, switches, routers, firewall, etc. The person signing off on E-rate services has to attest that the current vendor has no part in developing the service, that's a concern. Their recommendation is to do it all as part of the RFP. It is not going to be a large amount of savings.

Ms. Reitman discussed high school athletics. The entire athletics program is roughly \$499,000. If we look at fundraising, we would need to have \$200,000 available for the fall, which is our most expensive season. This is not something we are supporting, but we had to put it out there that that is a place where we are spending nearly half a million dollars.

Mr. Lamoin questioned how much of the grant we would have to repay if we don't utilize the field at the high school. The Chair stated they would look into that.

The Chair asked that administration get information on Behaviorists for the Thursday meeting (i.e. is one needed at each school).

Mr. Traub discussed restructuring administration at TMS and THS. Would recommend one director of Secondary Ed and four (4) assistant principals at TMS and THS.

Mr. Knight discussed his desire for high school athletics to not be cut.

Mr. Maniccia discussed his district's student activity fee and the amount it brings in, will bring in additional information for Thursday's meeting.

Mr. Vergaro discussed asking the Board of Finance for a year to cut three million for the budget and perhaps thinking about a new model for schools. He discussed cutting the school year to 182 days however, violates the contract we agreed to.

A straw poll was taken to see about looking into shortening the school year. Mr. Thibault and Ms. Hoehne were opposed. Ms. Richardson abstained. The vote passed to asking the union rep about shortening the school year.

COMMENTS FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

Mr. Traub stated he does not believe the Board should go to the Board of Finance and promise to get to zero next year.

Mr. Vergaro stated he hopes on Thursday that public comments brings some ideas on how to come up with the money and not have to close a school.

The Chair stated that she shares Mr. Traub's concern; she doesn't want to commit to a zero.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Thibault made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Traub seconded the motion. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 p.m.