

TORRINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
Discussion on Proposed 2010-2011 Budget
Special Meeting - March 22, 2010
6:00 p.m.

Torrington High School

CALL TO ORDER - The meeting was called to order by Ms. Cogswell at 6:09 p.m.

Roll Call:

Attending from Board: Susan Cogswell, David Oliver, and Ellen Hoehne

Also Present: A. Bates Lyons, Ken Traub, Frank Rubino, Danielle Batchelder, Chris Leone, Sue Domanico, Dave Bascetta, and Bill Joslyn

Absent: Judith Raymond

Recess 7:25-7:33

Public Speaker & Topic

Johanna Dezurik spoke as a representative of THS school counselors, in response to the reduction of school counselors at THS in the proposed budget for 2010-2011. She feels that THS needs to maintain the current staffing of 5 counselors.

Bob Maggi read a letter from Jami Smith Torr, the outreach counselor from the Torrington Youth Service. She spoke in support of the TMS and THS school guidance counselors.

Jim Fontana spoke in support of retaining all the TMS and THS school guidance counselors.

Tyler Nader, a senior at THS, spoke in support of the THS school guidance counselors.

Roxanne Feliciano spoke in support of retaining all the TMS and THS school guidance counselors.

Marjorie Pettersen spoke in favor of retaining a full-time Library Media Specialist at TMS, and against restructuring the media centers at the elementary level.

Denise Linden from Northwestern Connecticut Community College spoke in support of THS guidance school counselors.

Carol Lent spoke in support of the THS staff including the administration, teachers, support staff, and guidance counselors.

Susan Walsh, a school psychologist, spoke regarding the negative effects of reducing the school psychology staff.

Stephanie Hamed-Borowy, a school psychologist, spoke regarding the negative effects to students when reducing the school psychology staff.

Victor Leger, an art teacher at THS, spoke in support of retaining all school guidance counselors.

Daniel Lima spoke in support of the guidance counselors at TMS and the UBA.

Luis Pizarro spoke in support of the guidance counselors and the one-on-one contact which is so important to the students.

Debra Lopez spoke in support of the school counseling program. She spoke on behalf of New Opportunities Incorporated Self-Sufficiency Center which addresses many of the social service needs in the community and as a parent of a HS student.

Laiza Escano spoke in support of the school counseling program. She works for New Opportunities Incorporated as a case manager, and she also volunteers for the Summer Youth Program. She stated without the counselors she would have been unable to meet the students who need the programs available.

Biende Berroa spoke in support of the guidance counselors. His mother is a counselor and he knows that her counseling job means everything to her and that she really loves the students. He spoke of counselors who have made a difference in his life.

Anthony Lopez spoke in support of the guidance counselors. He is a single dad with 4 children. He spoke of counselors who have helped him through some difficult times.

Kim Deep spoke in support of the school guidance counselors who have greatly assisted her children.

Robin Magistratli spoke in support of the library media specialist. She works as a library media specialist and is also a parent. She summarized research findings which link library media specialists with improved student achievement in schools.

Charlie McSpirtt, one of the assistant principals at the high school and also the president of the TPS Administrator's Association, spoke in support of the administrators.

Kin Monahan spoke on behalf of the Center for Youth and Families, which is a child guidance agency. She spoke in support of the school guidance counselors.

Kathi Peterson spoke in support of the school guidance counselors, the administrators, the teachers, and the support staff.

Robert Gabor, who runs the ROTC program at THS, spoke in support of the guidance counselors at THS.

Betty Jo McDonnell, who works as a counselor, spoke in support of the TMS and THS school guidance counselors.

Elena Sileo, who works as a TMS counselor, spoke in support of the school guidance counselors.

John Savoia, a student, spoke in support of UBA program.

John Liberato spoke in support of the UBA program, the school guidance counselors, and the librarians.

Tiffany Ledoux spoke in support of the UBA program, the TMS school guidance counselors, and the 6th grade teachers.

Brian McDonell, a retired teacher and parent, spoke in support of the school guidance counselors.

Chris Del Bene, THS English/History teacher and vice president of the TEA for the high school, spoke in support of the school guidance counselors, the school psychologist, the administrators, secretaries, paras, and teachers at the high school.

Pat Strawson, THS teacher and IAL, spoke in support of the school guidance counselors, the administrators, business sections, the paraprofessionals, and the IALs.

Mr. Chris Leone stated that he thinks there were many good points raised, and he concurs with many of the student's, parent's, and counselor's statements. He projected that roughly \$870,000 additional monies would be needed to bring back all staff.

In answering some of the questions raised, Mr. Leone stated that the budget calls for an enrollment of 1,157, which holds flat. Currently, the high school is at 1,126. It has lost over 300 students since October of 2005. In regards to sections, those are as provided by the school, and some of the decrease is interest. Mr. Leone stated that at no time were cuts to UBA mentioned.

He stated that the elementary school doesn't have a counselor in 5th grade which hurts transitions. Next year this will be teamed. This basically allows for 5 teachers to work with a group of students, having common planning time to address their needs and work together, similar to the Upward Bound model.

In terms of guidance, the creation of a home-school liaison is a position that would reach grades 7 through 12. This position would work with the most at-risk students, roughly 200 students in the high school. Subtracting 200 students from 1100 students, would leave 900 students for the remaining 3 counselors, which would be 300 to 1. At TMS, if the 6th graders are removed from the equation, there are roughly 900 to 850 students. If 100 at-risk students are removed, there are 750 students. He has called for the increase of the home-school liaison position as the model has been very successful in moving students from middle school. If that person works with 100, there will be about 600 students, which would be a caseload of about 300 students to 1 counselor at the middle school.

In terms of IALs, there has been some pushback from the state. They are having issues with that certification. Those positions have to go back to classrooms. How the other subjects are looked at has to be addressed in curriculum. Mr. Leone has put a paramount on making sure there is a 6th through 12th grade math and literacy curriculum.

Mr. Leone stated that he understands the many issues and the sacrifices, but the question now is what the Board wishes to do in moving forward.

Mr. Leone encouraged emails and phone calls in regards to the budget.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Oliver moved and Mrs. Hoehne supported a motion to table the discussion until Wednesday night after the Board has a chance to digest the commentaries. The motion carried. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m. All were in favor.