

MARCH 21, 2007 SPECIAL MEETING

The Wethersfield Town Council held a Special Joint Meeting with the Board of Education on March 21, 2007 at 5:30 p.m. in the Board of Education Conference Room, 127 Hartford Avenue.

Present from Council: Councilors Drake, Forrest, Kirsche, Kotkin, Montinieri, Walsh, Deputy Mayor Fortunato, and Chairperson Adil

Present from Board of Education: Board Members DeAngelo, Malic, Montinieri, Rodriguez, Tristan Stanziale, and Chairperson Roberts.

Absent: Councilor Cascio; Board Members McKenna, Penny Stanziale and Vice-Chairperson Hodges.

Also present: Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager; Patrick Proctor, Superintendent of Schools; Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk; Judith Golden, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; Karen Baldwin, Director of Human Resources; Karen Clancy, Supervisor of Financial Services; Andy Lees, Interim Director of Special Education; and Maurice McCarthy, Supervisor of Facilities and Maintenance.

Board of Education Chairperson Roberts welcomed the Town Council Members to the meeting and said that this year's Board of Education budget is reasonable and well-thought out. She asked Dr. Proctor, Superintendent of Schools to present the budget.

Dr. Proctor, Superintendent of Schools said that it was a pleasure to be at this annual meeting. He is pleased to be presenting a budget at the current services level without large increases. He has worked hard to fill service gaps and keep a healthy budget base while using monies to deepen and extend the initiatives of last year. Any additional dollars in the budget are for existing initiatives. There are no new initiatives this year.

Dr. Proctor thanked staff in attendance for their hard work on this budget. He also wanted to thank the School Principals for their efforts in the budget process. Dr. Proctor stated the school system has worked hard on cost analysis and cost savings.

Dr. Proctor reviewed each slide with the Town Council and Board of Education, stating they should ask questions as they go along and that State wide increases in school budgets are between 6 and 6.5 per cent and that this budget is at 5.57 %, well under the State wide increases. Dr. Proctor reviewed the vision statement and the budget priorities.

He presented the following PowerPoint presentation outlining the Board of Education's 2007-2008 Recommended Education Budget:



[Wethersfield Public Schools Recommended 2007-2008 Education Budget \[220 KB PDF*\]](#)

Councilor Walsh asked if the additional teacher would accommodate all students.

Dr. Proctor said that these services are for students who have been assessed and show a need for more literacy skills. Each teacher will make a major impact on the literacy services. More literacy services are needed across the system.

Councilor Forrest asked that since Silas Deane Middle School has been up and running for a few years now with its energy efficiencies, could the Superintendent discuss savings that the Town is receiving from these efficiencies.

Dr. Proctor said that he does not know what the costs were before the renovation of the Middle School so he is not able to give energy cost savings. He said that it is likely that there have been energy savings based on the new mechanicals in the building. Also, the Board of Education received a \$90,000 energy grant as part of the renovations to implement energy enhancements.

Councilor Forrest said that the K-8 Science Specialist position would perform various enhancements to the program. Could Department Leaders implement these enhancements?

Dr. Proctor said that Department Leaders are strictly focused on the high school. This position is a leadership position at the other schools. This position would have very similar responsibilities as the Department Leaders at the High School.

Councilor Forrest asked about the normal replacement cycle for text books. Does this cycle take into consideration when the Board of Education changes its curriculum?

Dr. Proctor said that the cycle does take into consideration curriculum changes. Every five to seven years new curriculum is written. The cycles are staggered.

Councilor Forrest asked about the University of New Haven intern program supplying substitute teachers. He asked if it is anticipated to expand the program with other universities.

Dr. Proctor said that the University of New Haven approached the Town.

Dr. Judith Golden said that Dr. Jacobi went from Glastonbury and started this program at the University of New Haven. She said that she does not know of any other intern program like it. The Town pays the tuition for the University student to enroll in the intern program. The fee is less than the cost of a substitute. The Town also gets one additional intern at no cost for every seven tuitions paid.

Councilor Drake asked how the Board of Education will acquire its half time School Psychologist.

Dr. Proctor said that the Board of Education will look for a part-time person. In some cases, the Board of Education will make a part-time person full-time, but not in this case.

Councilor Drake asked why the non-certified account went up so much.

Dr. Proctor said that the largest impact, beyond the contractual impact, includes step increases. The clerical, paraprofessional, and secretarial union has many employees not at the top step. These individuals will receive step increases as well as salary raises. The second reason is the addition of the security officer position. The third reason was unanticipated paraprofessional positions that were created. These positions were needed for individual special education students that are either new to the school system or new to qualify for this service. 10 to 15 new positions were created this year.

Councilor Drake asked when the steps balance out because new people replace the older ones.

Dr. Proctor said that the non-certified group is a less veteran group. There is much more turnover with this group.

Board Chairperson Roberts said she wanted to clarify that the Board of Education does not just decide to hire more paraprofessionals. It is mandated to be done.

A discussion ensued concerning steps in general and the hiring and use of paraprofessionals.

Councilor Kirsche asked how the Security Residency Officer will work with the Police Resource Officer.

Dr. Proctor said that the Resource Officer is funded through the Police Department. It is a Law Enforcement Position that is not involved in residency issues. Both positions are part of safety, security and support for the students. Both of these positions will be based out of the High School.

Councilor Kirsche said that two years ago there were no security positions at the High School. He wondered why two positions are needed only two years later.

Dr. Proctor said that the Resource Officer position was created about four years ago. There have been incidents that have occurred and a growing concern over the last few years for additional safety. This is about prevention and security for the children.

Councilor Kotkin said that when discussing the teacher contract, Dr. Proctor said he anticipated 8 retirements. Are you assuming that new teachers will be hired at the bottom or middle of the wage scale?

Dr. Proctor said that he is anticipating hiring in the middle of the wage scale. This anticipation is based on prior experience.

Councilor Kotkin asked if there are other retirements in the school system.

Dr. Proctor said that he does not believe so.

Councilor Kotkin asked about retirements in the non-certified staff.

Director of Human Resources Karen Baldwin responded there are none built in. She said that the Board of Education tries to project retirements in non-certified accounts. The Board of Education has reason to believe that the '09 budget will have a greater impact with retirements due to changes in the teachers' contract.

Councilor Kotkin asked what the difference was between the line item of \$240,400 and the line item of \$513,334 for book replacement.

Dr. Proctor said that the \$513,334 was the replacement of torn or lost books not new initiatives.

Councilor Kotkin asked if the proposed health care budget was too aggressive.

Dr. Proctor said that it is reasonable but aggressive based on a substantial amount of analysis to recent claims experience.

Supervisor of Financial Services Karen Clancy said that the Board of Education tracks the claim's history. This year mirrors the '05-'06 claims history. They reviewed the impact of the current claims this year, the elimination of the Blue Care premium, and estimating the savings of the lower cost H.S.A. premium. Chris Munroe, the Town's Insurance Agent of Record told the Board of Education he believed that the Board of Education was on target with its numbers.

Director of Human Resources Karen Baldwin said that the Board of Education consists of 70 percent of the health insurance costs it shares with the Town. In the '06-'07 budget, the current budget, shows a 72 percent share by the Board of Education but this year, the Board of Education is tracking costs at about 68 percent.

Councilor Kotkin said that he would like to see a break down of increases for heat, energy, and electricity by school for the next budget session with the Board of Education. Heat, energy, and electricity accounts show large increases in the budget. The Council approved a \$300,000 project to improve the heating and humidifying of the Wethersfield High School pool. Some significant savings are anticipated and he wanted to be sure they were included in the budget.

Dr. Proctor said he would have that analysis ready for the budget session.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato asked if the Board is presently a member of CABA and if so how much does that cost.

Dr. Proctor said that the Board of Education is a member. It cost \$6,000 for an introductory offer. Next year it will cost

\$12,000.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato asked if the stipends for the leaders increase every year.

Dr. Proctor said that the stipends go along with the general wage increases.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato asked, in regard to text books, under the acquisition plan presently implemented if the Board of Education is on target with book replacement or is there a lag.

Dr. Proctor said that next year the Board of Education will finally close the gap. 2010 the school system will be maintaining what it presently has.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato asked whether the Town Staff could provide the service of the part-time school psychologist.

Dr. Proctor said that this has not been discussed. This position is a mandated service for assessment of students. This will help us to implement the mandate. The Board of Education can receive reimbursement for Medicare eligible children receiving these services. The Board of Education uses it as an offset for the services.

Deputy Mayor Fortunato asked that the Board of Education provide its income sources such as grants it receives for the budget session. She said that she completely endorses the notification system, surveillance equipment and resource officer as it is all part of a larger growing need for security.

Councilor Montinieri asked about the worker's compensation line item. He said the line showed a rather significant hit and wondered if the insurance carrier will look at the increase and make suggestions.

Dr. Proctor said that there have been unusually large worker's compensation claims, not more of them.

Director of Human Resources Karen Baldwin said that the Board of Education has experienced two bad claim years.

Councilor Montinieri said that he attended the Northeast Utilities workshop last week and heard that some very significant savings were seen in the magnet school system through very aggressive CL&P programs and grants. He asked if the Board of Education has looked into these programs.

Dr. Proctor said they have used CL&P programs previously but will contact them to see if there are new programs the Board of Education could utilize.

Chairperson Adil thanked the Board of Education for its presentation and asked Councilors to direct additional questions through the Town Manager's office to the Superintendent.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6:59 p.m., Councilor Forrest moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Montinieri. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk

Approved as amended by vote of Council April 2, 2007

*This linked file is in Adobe's Portable Document Format. To view it you will need Adobe Reader installed on your computer. It is available for free download at:

