

Please Note: These minutes are pending Board approval.

Board of Education
Newtown, Connecticut

Minutes of the Board of Education special budget meeting on Monday, January 31, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. in the board room at 3 Primrose Street.

W. Hart, Chair	J. Robinson
D. Leidlein, Vice Chair	L. Gejda
A. Buzzi, Secretary	R. Bienkowski
D. Nanavaty	16 Staff
L. Bittman	15 Public
R. Gaines	2 Press
K. Alexander	

Mr. Hart called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Item 1 – Newtown High School

Mrs. Bittman asked for a sense of priorities between the status quo budget and the recommended budget.

Mr. Dumais requested additional staffing. We need to improve our CAPT performance. With the exception of last year we have been at the extreme in the DRG in comparison to students per teacher. He spoke about the need for another assistant principal. The number of teacher observations and class visits and direct connections with students equals approximately 565 hours per year. One-fourth of their time is dealing with student issues. He is also requesting a social studies teacher. With new legislation there will be changes and additional requirements for the high school. We are in a good position with NEASC in a number of areas especially with the expansion completed but we have not resolved their concern about the level of support staff for the school. One secretarial position would satisfy that concern. Also included is a .2 position for the FLEX program. Putting interventions in place will ensure student success. A .2 English language learner position is also requested. We need to address approximately 12 students who need to be taught how to learn US History in English. Regarding the assistant principal request with the addition we have a larger area to be responsible for.

Mr. Nanavaty said we are under our guidelines in math, English and science at 21 students. He asked about the .2 teacher for math in FLEX.

Mr. Dumais said that last year there was an additional teaching position. We have 24 students in math.

Mr. Nanavaty asked for figures of successes in FLEX. We have to try to justify why we can't stay at status quo.

Mr. Hart said the status quo increase for the high school is 2% over last year. The recommended budget increase is 5.2%. He asked for the prioritization of those positions if the high school was just given a reduced amount.

Mrs. Bittman thinks the educational decisions should be made by the administrators and we should give a financial amount for the reduction rather than choose the items to cut.

Mr. Dumais said the assistant principal and social studies teacher would be on top of the list. We are currently in need of a number of musical instruments but it is cheaper to buy instead of rent.

Mrs. Bittman asked to see a comparison of renting and purchasing instruments because of hidden maintenance costs.

Mrs. Leidlein questions the Project Adventure equipment.

Mr. Dumais said this program has never been done at the high school and will enhance the physical education program.

Item 2 – Newtown Middle School

Mrs. Sherlock cut \$4,000 from the postage budget because they aren't mailing items anymore. Language arts textbooks are needed and \$4,000 was added for the China initiative. There was an error in the master scheduler stipend on page 45. It was \$1,500 this year and \$500 more for next year for a total of \$2,000. A replacement page will be needed. We are requesting a .14 teacher increase for Integrated Math 3.

Mrs. Sherlock said this was the fifth year she has asked for an additional counselor. It has been increasingly difficult to deal with the students and families. She feels it is important for the emotional needs of our students and to allow the students to have the same counselor for both years. She also requested a ten-month assistant principal.

Mrs. Bittman asked if the Reed counselors move with the students. Dr. Robinson stated that they did.

Mr. Hart said there was a \$64,000 increase in non-salaried expenses. Half of that is in supplies at a 25% increase.

Mrs. Sherlock said they cut out supplies last year so we did not buy much. We need to replenish what we couldn't buy last year. She stated that the counselor is her #1 request.

Mr. Nanavaty said Mrs. Sherlock doesn't ask for things unless there is a need. He would like to see us try and give this to her.

Item 3 – Reed Intermediate School

Dr. Epple said the status quo budget isn't adequate for Reed. She asked to have the project adventure position put back as the program is necessary for these students and we have the teacher. We would have to hire a PE teacher. Another request is \$6,155 for Time for Kids and Scholastic magazines for students. It is a curriculum resource. Mr. Nanavaty verified that Reed lost a PE teacher last year along with Project Adventure and the music technology teacher.

Item 4 – Elementary Schools

Hawley:

Mrs. Peters said the status quo budget impacts Hawley because it means shifting a teacher from another school to Hawley for first grade. She feels having all-day kindergarten is well overdue and encouraged the Board to look at what it would cost to implement a full day kindergarten program.

Mrs. Leidlein asked what Hawley would have to purchase if an all-day kindergarten program was adopted and if there was any expense for staff development for new staff. She asked if there were enough teachers.

Mrs. Peters said additional money was not needed. Hawley would have four sections of kindergarten. She asked for a .1 increase in Art. We can accommodate lunch and decided that kindergarten or another grade level would eat in their classrooms.

Mr. Nanavaty said a lot of districts proposing full-day kindergarten started by having extended days and gradually moved to full day and questioned why we couldn't do that. Dr. Robinson said the savings in transportation offsets the cost for full-day kindergarten. Mr. Nanavaty felt we would only have the savings the first year but Mr. Hart indicated the savings would be each year because there would be no midday bus run.

Mr. Buzzi said phasing makes it more expensive because you still have the midday bus costs. We need figures on a pilot program.

Mr. Nanavaty said we need data to make an educated decision to have kindergarten all day in all schools or just certain schools.

Dr. Robinson said then there would be discrimination between the students.

Mrs. Bittman said we need more information. There have been emails from parents concerned about the readiness of these students for full-day kindergarten. We should explore the idea of an option for parents.

Mrs. Leidlein asked if Hawley would require any construction to have a full-day kindergarten program.

Mrs. Peters said there would just be some shifting. She has spaces that could be used.

Mr. Hart asked about the survey results. Dr. Gejda said a significant number were interested in full-day kindergarten.

Mrs. Bittman asked what percentage of grade schools in this country have full-day vs. half-day kindergarten.

Dr. Gejda said a lot of our first grade students come in with a full-day pre-school experience.

Sandy Hook School:

Mrs. Hochsprung said she is reducing by a .5 kindergarten teacher, a first and third grade teacher and a three-hour per day kindergarten education assistant. Regarding full-day kindergarten, she feels we should offer this to all families.

Mr. Nanavaty asked if there was room at Sandy Hook. Mrs. Hochsprung would realign space with no problem to support the program. In her previous district some students had extended days and others started the year with a full day.

Head O'Meadow School:

Ms. Gasparine said they will lose a half session of kindergarten, gain a first grade and lose a second grade teacher. She has included increased supplies for pre-school.

There are increases in library costs due to very outdated resource books. She requested a .2 PE teacher which will allow teachers a common time to meet by using the

block schedule that began in January. She also supports a full-day kindergarten and has the room for it.

Middle Gate School:

Mr. Geissler said it would be helpful to have a full-day kindergarten considering the need for Response to Intervention in Middle Gate. We will lose one classroom teacher but increase by a first grade teacher. He is also requesting more current books in the library.

Mrs. Leidlein asked if there was room at Middle Gate for a full-day kindergarten program. Mr. Geissler said we have five sections for kindergarten now and would just have to reconfigure rooms for an additional section.

Item 5 – Plant

Mr. Faiella addressed the plant budget.

Mr. Bienkowski spoke about the electricity costs in the schools. Kilowatt usage in the schools has declined but will increase at the high school due to the new addition. They will have 14% for electricity with the rest at 8%. The estimate for next year is 17.3 cents per kilowatt. Estimate for oil and gas could change with problems in Egypt.

Mr. Hart asked for a breakdown of fuels.

Mr. Bienkowski said the sewer fee is going up \$15,517 based on the high school addition. The assessment usage charge is over \$93,000.

Mr. Faiella is requesting a new maintenance vehicle, snow removal equipment for Reed and district furniture requirements as determined.

MOTION: Mr. Gaines moved to adjourn. Mr. Alexander seconded. Vote: 7 ayes

Item 6 - Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Andrew Buzzi, Jr.
Secretary