

**CITY OF NORWALK
JOINT BOE AND FINANCE COMMITTEES
SPECIAL MEETING
JANUARY 9, 2020**

ATTENDANCE: **Common Council Finance Committee**

Greg Burnett, Chair
Ernest Dumas
David Heuvelman
Tom Keegan
John Kydes
George Theodoris

Board of Education Finance

Barbara Meyers-Mitchell, Chair
Diane Caprio
Sherelle Harris (6:10 p.m.)
Colin Hosten (6:06 p.m.)

OTHERS: Mayor Harry Rilling; Thomas Hamilton, BOE Finance; Council President Barbara Smyth; Council Member Tom Livingston, Joe Giandurco, NFT Vice President; BOE Member Erica DePalma, BOE Member Godfrey Azima; Kristin Karczmit, Budget Finance Director; Yvette Goorevitch, Chief of Specialized Learning and Student Services

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Burnett called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. A quorum was present. Mr. Burnett greeted everyone and introduced those Committee members seated.

**DISCUSSION OF BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET GOALS AND
PRELIMINARY REVIEW AND EXPENDITURE PROJECTIONS**

Mr. Burnett then said that budget would be submitted on January 15th and the Board of Education will be voting on that budget on the 21st of January. He reminded everyone that the meeting would end promptly at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Colin Hosten joined the meeting at 6:06 p.m.

Ms. Meyers-Mitchell said that the Board members were excited to work with the Finance Committee on the proposed Budget.

Mr. Joe Giandurco came forward and said that the NFT was excited about some of the

initiatives in the budget. The Union acknowledges that the salaries and benefits constitute a large portion of the budget. He also indicated that the Union recognizes the needs of the students along with the needs of the taxpayers.

Mayor Rilling came forward and said that the most important job that the City officials have is budgeting for the City services. He commended the Boards for working together and said that it was an ambitious budget for the BOE. He said that there were changes and both sides need to do some soul searching to determine things that were absolutely essential and things that could wait. The City departments have been given a mandate to keep their budgets flat

Ms. Harris joined the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

Mayor Rilling commented that too often there are stories about people moving out of the State of Connecticut because of the property taxes which are due whether they have a job or not. It is an overwhelming task putting together a budget and having a 7% increase is a major challenge. The rainy day fund has to be there in case of a catastrophic event so the City has to be careful not to use the fund for regular expenses.

Mayor Rilling said that he had attended the presentation the other night and understands the challenges.

Mr. Hamilton, the BOE Chief Financial Officer, then greeted the Committee members and said that Dr. Adamowski was not able to attend the meeting. However, Mr. Hamilton then read a statement that Dr. Adamowski had made on January 7, 2020 into the record (See attached).

Copies of the complete budget are available online at the Norwalk Public School website.

Mr. Hamilton then narrated a PowerPoint presentation titled "FY 2020-21 Superintendent's Recommended Operation Budget "Raising the Bar -- Closing the Gap".

Ms. Karczmit then gave an overview of the 2020-21 Budget Goals. She said that almost 93% of the requested increases were incorporated in Goals 1 through 9.

Regarding Goal #2, Mr. Hamilton said that the average per student costs is about \$1,800/per student, but the \$8,193 cost for projected enrollment increase of 406. This is not an average cost, but the amount that the schools are receiving based on their student population. Discussion followed.

Ms. Karczmit then gave an overview of the costs associated with the sudden and unexpected increase of ELL students, which includes teachers, a psychologist, and textbooks. Mr. Hamilton reminded everyone that Federal Law requires the District to comply with their requirements. Discussion followed.

Ms. Meyers-Mitchell said that Norwalk is leading the State in this area and noted that this was a three year program. Mr. Hamilton explained that the enrollment projects were produced by Malone & MacBroom based on their data for Norwalk with statistical models and techniques. The increase in the current year was not expected and therefore not included in the current budget. Ms. Karczmit directed everyone's attention to page 9 of the full budget which has a break out of the enrollment data. There is also a chart showing the steady increase in enrollment since 2013.

Ms. Karczmit then reviewed the financial costs for the various Choice Programs as listed in Budget Goal #4. Discussion followed about preparing the students for college and career paths. Kendall School will move to a year round schedule that will limit the number of vacation breaks in order to prevent the "summer slide" and also to provide enrichment. Discussion followed about the \$478,000 for the new year round program. Ms. Meyers-Mitchell said that there would be a presentation on the program on Tuesday. Mr. Hamilton explained that the District has to provide funding in order to receive additional funds.

Ms. Karczmit reviewed the General Student Transportation Contract.

Ms. Goorevitch came forward to speak about Budget Goal # 6 -- Counseling & Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) which the adults and the children learn skills to become more integrated. 80% of the students will respond to effective affective instruction and will develop the skills that they need. There are students who experience trauma will need short term but intensive work. There are six basic skills that everyone needs to learn, such as self-awareness, development of techniques for calming. Practicing the skills and social awareness including kindness and the absence of bullying. The final issue is decision making.

Ms. Goorevitch also spoke about the School Counseling program. The focus needs to be re-energized. this has lead to the realization that there needs to be a Director of School Counseling. Ms. Goorevitch then reviewed the various duties that would come with such a position along with High School Career and College Counseling Center Coordinators. Discussion about the details followed.

Ms. Karczmit gave a brief overview of the Carver Center After School Partnership as shown in the presentation, along with Budget Goal #8, American Sign Language and Budget Goal #9 which is focused on 7th Grade Summer School.

Mr. Hamilton then narrated the final slides which were focused on the Enrollment Summary with the Committee members. He said that they were available to answer questions.

Mr. Hosten said that he was pleased to be on this side of the budget process. He pointed

out that the fact that the contractual obligations were the largest portion of the budget was something to be considered.

WRAP UP AND NEXT STEPS

There were no additional comments or questions at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Burnett closed the meeting at 7:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services