

## **Litchfield Board of Finance Special Meeting Minutes March 20, 2017**

**Call to Order:** Chairman David Wilson called the meeting to order in the LIS Art Room at 7:00p.m. with Mitchell Fishman, Anne Dranginis, Helen Bunnell, Matt Terzian, and Sky Post (Alt.) present.

Absent: Rose Blondin (Alt.)

Also present: Sherri Turner, David Fiorillo, and Frank Simone

### **Review Board of Education 2017/2018 Budget Proposal**

Superintendent Sherri Turner said the schools budgeting process began in November. She reduced the school administration proposed budget by \$589,127, which represents an increase of 3.1% rather than the original 6.5%. The new proposed budget is \$17,890,000. She noted that salaries and benefits equal 75% of the school's operating costs. The following proposed budgets were outlined in a PowerPoint presentation: Regular Instruction is \$234,260; Special Education has increased by 1.5% at \$957,050; Pupil Services has decreased by 8.3% at \$333,941; Food Services originally proposed budget of \$46,000 has been reduced to \$16,000 due to operational changes made last year to reduce the cost of the Food Services Director; Salaries & Wages is set at \$10,983,065.

Director of Business Operations David Fiorillo reviewed the three kinds of contracts, LEA, ASFCME and LAA. He said enrollment is a total of 946 students for all three schools for 2016-2017. Estimated enrollment for 2017-2018 is 960. He said outplaced students are not included in this total but are the fiscal responsibility of the town of Litchfield. Cost per pupil for 2016-2017 is \$17,013 and projected at \$17,308 for 2017-2018. This cost does not include grant-based funding.

Director Fiorillo said the Employee Benefits line item has increased by 8.2% and is \$3,035,295 in the proposed budget. He said the schools are self-insured and answered questions about increases in health insurance premiums, efforts to control healthcare costs through wellness programs, and administration for health insurance by Anthem. There was a discussion about food preparation and availability of healthy food choices. Director Fiorillo noted that employees are offered \$2000/year if they do not opt for health insurance, thereby saving approximately \$15,000 annually.

Director Fiorillo noted that Food Services is now included in the line item of District Wide Services, which is budgeted for \$326,199, under Pupil Services. Plant Operations has increased by 12.2% at \$645,407. He said the schools entered into an agreement with Eversource to install an LED lighting upgrade for a total cost of \$380,000, to be paid over four years. On the revenue side, he said the school collects rental fees for the use of their spaces, which is kept in a separate fund. He distributed an updated page to the original budget book, entitled Litchfield Public Schools Budget – by Program and a breakdown sheet entitled Staffing Summary by Fund.

Superintendent Turner discussed the importance of having five full-time guidance counsellors, who offer social and emotional student support as well as college and career guidance. She answered questions about special education, noting that to keep these students in the district requires a team. She said 28 special education students are currently outplaced. Director Fiorillo answered questions about transportation methods and costs for these students.

Director Fiorillo responded to a question about encumbered expenses and offered to provide a more detailed report on encumbered funds. He agreed with Chairman Wilson that the schools' goal is to avoid overtaxing town residents. He noted that Outside Tuition has decreased by 40.7% at \$95,500; Custodial Services is budgeted for \$1,100,000 and there will be a transfer from the town of Litchfield for these services. In reply to questions about the change on inside maintenance, he said the schools are not adequately maintained and the BOE made the decision to change the MOU.

Chairman Wilson noted that with the BOE budget and the BOS budget combined, the town is facing a 3Mil increase. In reply to a question as to where possible cuts could be made, Director Fiorillo said the BOE is supportive of the proposed spending plan but they are open to working with the town and BOF on it. He said there might be items that could be postponed for a year. He replied to questions about obligations for the Wages & Benefits line item of \$10,983,045 and reiterated that the BOE had the authority, in accord with state statute, to enter into the multi-year bus contract. Chairman Wilson mentioned that the expense of using an attorney to explain the bus contract issue could have been avoided if the BOE had come to the BOF directly.

Director Fiorillo explained that the LEA union contract for 2017-2018 includes extra duty pay and long-term substitute teachers. He responded to a question about the total costs for all the principals and consortiums and partnerships currently in place to effect greater cost savings. Superintendent Turner answered questions about line items for Legal and Weather Forecast costs.

#### **Board of Finance Discussion on the Proposed Budget and Take any Action Deemed Necessary**

Mitchell Fishman asked about the capital spending proposal that was rejected by the Capital Committee, noting that removing the item of cafeteria tables, which should be a capital item rather than listed in the operating budget, would represent a \$44,000 cut of the presented operating budget. Director Fiorillo said the tables were considered a safety issue.

Chairman Wilson noted there is a March 27 special BOF meeting scheduled and the next regular meeting is on April 10. He asked when the BOE preferred to return to the BOF with changes to their budget showing a reduction in the 3.1% increase. Director Fiorillo said a 2% reduction in the proposed budget would have significant impact. BOE member Frank Simone requested specific suggestions from the BOF on adjusting their budget. Director Fiorillo said he was not comfortable reducing the health insurance costs unless the BOE could return to the BOF if those costs rose. Mitchell Fishman noted there was not a pay-as-you-go agenda item but it was possible the BOF members would agree to put \$34,000 into that category and remove it from the operating budget. Frank Simone said the BOE will meet to discuss this issue on March 29.

#### **Adjournment**

Chairman Wilson declared the meeting adjourned at 9:45p.m.

The tentative next meeting will be a special meeting on Monday, April 3, 2017 at 7:00p.m. in the LIS Art Room

Respectfully submitted,

Jo Ann Jaacks  
Recording Secretary