

**SHELTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING
Board of Education Administrative Offices
382 Long Hill Avenue
Board Room**

BUDGET WORKSHOP #2

January 16, 2019

Chairman Mark Holden called the Special Meeting of the Board of Education to order at 6:40 p.m.

Roll Call:

Mark Holden, Chairman

Thomas Minotti, Vice Chairman

Kate Kutash, Secretary

Anne Gaydos

David Gioiello

José Goncalves (absent)

Amanda Kilmartin

Darlisa Ritter

Kathleen Yolish

Quorum – 8 Present; 1 Absent

Board of Education Administration present: Christopher Clouet, Superintendent of Schools; Ed Drapp, Finance Director; Carole Pannozzo, Human Resources Director

(1 tape on file in Town Clerk's Office)

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Thomas Minotti moved to approve the agenda; motion seconded by Kate Kutash and passed unanimously.

Public Hearing

Chairman Holden explained there will be two opportunities for public comment, one at the start and one at the end of the meeting, which will take the place of having a separate meeting just for public comment.

Joan Littlefield, 3 Earl Street, expressed her concern that labs might be discontinued for chemistry and some other science courses and having science be lecture only. Dr. Clouet stated that is not the case. We are looking at reorganizing (redesigning) the labs, and most of the classes will have labs.

Review Budget Requests

Superintendent Clouet said he invited elementary principals, the Information Technology Department and Teaching and Learning Department to be present to answer any specific questions that might arise during the presentation. He stated the purpose tonight is to have conversations about forecasting where we are likely to be headed and for the board to reach a consensus of the percentage increase we should be asking for. He said he has some suggestions and following conversation would like to propose a percentage to be discussed.

Ed Drapp reviewed handouts on Current Service Level & Requests; Potential Funding Gap; and Current Service Level Budget Projection and discussion was held. David Gioiello commented the budget needs to reflect the accountability necessary to get us to the end result of being in the 25th percentile. Dr. Clouet said when we get to the point of making our formal presentation to the Board of Aldermen, we want to link our requests to academics (Requests from our principals and program directors were about academics or Social Emotional Learning, having counselors, etc.), and also on infrastructure (There are a number of infrastructure related things that are a part of the work we do.) He agreed with the notion that once we get to that point, we ought to frame our budget around those things.

Board members were invited to ask specific questions of the principals and program directors regarding their requests.

There was discussion of library requests. Dr. Clouet noted all of the requests are very thoughtful and responsible. Books in our libraries should reflect the diversity of our community and planet, which is an ongoing process. Suggestion was made to find other ways to raise funds for this, possibly through PTOs. In response to a question about software, Vicky White discussed software program PebbleGo. Dan DiVito provided information about a request for a district license for Seesaw, a digital portfolio product for students, which is getting positive feedback currently at SIS, and he would like to bring it to elementary level. Darlisa Ritter asked Dan DiVito to provide a list of Chromebooks by school. Relative to the request for 18.5 additional staff, David Gioiello said the board will look to Superintendent Clouet as the best person to prioritize and make the difficult decisions as we get closer to a final number.

(Note: Tape 1, Side B @ 7:43 p.m.)

The self-insurance program for 1:1 Chromebooks was discussed, and Dan DiVito explained the current plan for parents unable to pay, which is minimal. David Gioiello said the City needs to see where we are funding those parents and we need to demonstrate to the BOA the trend from textbooks to Chromebooks. Darlisa Ritter suggested reducing legal fees by researching other firms. She also suggested the cost for ASCD membership could be borne by individuals rather than the district. David Gioiello referred to Burden of Proof and questioned if there are things we can do reduce outplacements. Dr. Clouet discussed this and said the next budget meeting will include the Special Education personnel, who can speak to this in more detail.

Superintendent Clouet stated over the last ten years we have received less than 50% of our ask. He said although he would like to ask for a 7% increase, that is not realistic in terms of engaging politically with the appropriate authorities. He suggested a 2.99% increase; and, if there is a consensus of the board, he would start the process with his team to craft a presentation that would prioritize or reduce some of the asks, all of which are reasonable, to something that would fit into a 2.99% (\$2.2 million) increase. Chairman Holden stated by prioritizing it, we can still state that when we looked at what we felt the needs were, the dollar amount was in the 7% range; but, recognizing the importance of keeping taxes low and reasonable, we have prioritized it down to a more manageable level. He emphasized this is not a wish list. There is no fat. It is what is needed. Dr. Clouet said if we continue to get a million or 1.2 million dollar increase each year for the next 5 or 6 years, it will mean cutting staff, administrators and materials; we will not be able to provide kids with what they need. We have a vision of what we think kids need, and we have to demand that the city appropriating authorities have a vision, as well. Right now, it's not clear what

that vision is, and it can't just be transactional (does it cost more or does it cost less?). If we are going to take care of senior citizens, as we should, and people who are sick and have needs, as we should, we also need to say children are citizens of this city and need to be represented by politicians. General discussion followed. Members talked about the presentation and the importance of justifying every increase by showing how it gets us to the end point, gets us to the 25th percentile, and how it addresses the social emotional needs of students. Chairman Holden said there is a time limit for our presentation, so it will be important to turn as much of this as possible into a written narrative. Dr. Clouet stated all the information will be given to members of BOA and A&T to review prior to the presentation, and hopefully they (and BOE members) will read it and ask any questions in advance, rather than wait until the night of the presentation.

Public Hearing

Paul Littlefield, 3 Earl Street, said there are many in the community who believe kids are the future. He stated the board needs to ask for what it needs and get that message out to the public. He said you will never get what you ask for and to start high, asking for enough to come down a little. He said sports and extracurricular activities are lovely, but the job of the school system is to prepare them academically for life. He said providing vocational education and a strong foreign language program are important to meet the demands of the future. He stressed the importance of prioritizing the classroom over the sports field, simply because that's where the kids need preparation the most.

Superintendent Clouet noted this is Ed Drapp's final evening and said he has worked very hard during his time with the district. Chairman Holden agreed and said he has continued to work to improve the quality of reports he prepared for us and has been a professional in every way. He was wished success in his new career. Ed expressed appreciation and said serving for the needs of the kids is what it's all about and noted he has never seen a board more involved in the schools.

Adjournment

Chairman Mark Holden adjourned the meeting at 8:26 p.m.

***Diane Luther
Secretary to Board of Education
January 24, 2019***