Chairman Mark Holden called the Special Meeting of the Board of Education to order at 6:08 p.m.

Roll Call:
Mark Holden, Chairman
Thomas Minotti, Vice Chairman
Arlene Liscinsky, Secretary
David Gioiello (via Teleconference)
Faith Hack

Kate Kutash
Win Oppel (Via Skype)
Darlisa Ritter
Kathleen Yolish

Full Quorum

Board of Education Administration present:
Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Christopher Clouet
Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Lorraine Rossner
Finance Director, Dominic Barone
Human Resources Director, Carole Pannozzo

(1 tape on file in City/Town Clerk’s office)

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda
Faith Hack moved to approve the agenda; seconded by Win Oppel; motion passed unanimously.

Budget Discussion
Superintendent Clouet said he trimmed down the number arrived at during the last budget meeting and presented his budget recommendation reflecting a net increase of $1,647,230 (2.37%). He said he is not advocating for additional staff at the administrative level with this budget, given the news from the Governor today, what we are hearing from the federal government and the local economic climate. He stated there might be a way towards the end of the fiscal year to allow us to offer support to the two larger elementary schools. There was brief discussion about possible retirement incentive for teachers as a way to save money. Carole Pannozzo said she is not aware of any teacher retirements at this time; however, there are 33 teachers with 30 years or more currently working in the district, and a full teacher retirement under the TRB is 35 years without penalty. She said if the board wants to have a discussion with the Teachers Union, we can certainly move in that direction. Dr. Clouet stated if the board directs us at a future meeting to explore this, we can do so.
Superintendent Clouet discussed his proposed budget in detail and responded to questions from the board. Darlisa Ritter requested that overtime for IT be listed as a separate item. Dr. Clouet said that is not hard to do and noted that money is in the bottom line and is not additional money. He asked all members of the board to take into consideration that while overtime is a very legitimate subject for discussion, we have to remember that the work has to be done; and, if we were to eliminate overtime or reduce it considerably, the work remains. This could affect the length of time between a work order being submitted and being completed. Dr. Clouet stated he is concerned about the issue of overtime and has had discussion with staff. Dr. Ritter said this might be one area to possibly make eliminations or change schedules to make things more effective and efficient. Dr. Clouet said he is interested in both having a more efficient approach to delivering technology services and making sure that we offer our children the quality they deserve. He feels it would be a misstep to focus solely on the issue of overtime when the bigger issue is how do we deliver the necessary tools to our students for the future, and that requires having the technical support to do it, but doing it better.

**Operating Budget**

**Wages and Benefits; Instruction/Improvements//Tuition/Transportation** – All items were reviewed. Dr. Clouet stated the Total Employee Benefits amount shown is based on our current arrangement of self-insurance. If that were to change, the cost is expected to be similar, at least for the first year.

**Administrative/Utilities/Building/Support/Equipment** – Items were discussed and questions addressed. Darlisa Ritter followed up on a concern raised previously by David Gioiello about phones assigned to administrators and asked if the cost could be reduced by eliminating some of the mobile phones. Superintendent Clouet said the purpose of the mobile phones is to make us available seven days a week for work, which is very typical in the business world. Mark Holden said it is easier to reach an administrator in case of an emergency and cited an example. Dominic Barone stated that phones can be subject to FOIA and that people would not want to use personal phones for work texts or emails because they would be giving up personal information. Dr. Clouet stated he understands the need to look at every potential area of savings but does not believe the district is spending in a thoughtless manner on our phone system.

Dr. Clouet stated his recommended budget of $1,647,230 is based on a lot of conversations with the leadership team, teachers, the Board of Education, and parents. He said the 2.37% budget increase represents a good balance between adding staff so that we are making some improvements in the district and, at the same time, taking into consideration the local economic climate and the burden that taxpayers face. Mark Holden said something to bear in mind is in June after the aldermen have done their allocation for us, we will need to prioritize what we’re going to do with the resources we have available.

**FF&E/Technology Requests** – General discussion of items. Dan DiVito confirmed that Promethean Boards are currently in Kindergarten, grade 1 and grade 4. Consensus was to add $80,000 to the request for technology (interactive projectors) for all grades 2 and 3. Dr. Clouet mentioned the SIS students do great work using digital media in the Video Production Lab with very outdated equipment that needs to be updated.
Capital Items

Near Term Projects – There was discussion of paving and possibility of adding more parking area at Central Office. Arlene Liscinsky commented that as long as she can recall, single-pane windows at LHS have been on the list of requests, and this should be a higher priority. She also mentioned lighting for girls softball field at SHS has been ongoing and is an equity issue.

Long Term Projects – Dr. Clouet reviewed the items for years 2017-2021 and addressed questions.

Items Voted On

Win Oppel moved to accept the Superintendent’s Recommended Budget and the Long-Term Expenditure Plan as presented; seconded by Faith Hack. Discussion. Board members expressed their views and concerns. Darlisa Ritter preferred to have 24 hours to review the information presented. Arlene Liscinsky said she would like to see the request a little bit higher but will defer to the superintendent and staff and support their decision. Kathy Yolish was not happy that nothing could be done about extra social workers or at least 1 assistant principal. Faith Hack commended the Superintendent and Finance Director in getting the numbers down to a reasonable place. Kate Kutash said she supports the recommendation but will be watching the assistant principal situation. Mark Holden said this is our budget request, and we will do our actual budget in June when we will know what we can do with what is allocated. At that time, we could look at the overtime issue. Thomas Minotti stated he will support the recommendation with reservation, since he supported at least 1 assistant principal, noting the request is one of the smallest amounts we have asked for over the years. David Gioiello stated the increases reflect the needs of the students, and he is ready to vote tonight. Win Oppel said a lot of hard work was done to get to this point. We took the ZBB approach and came out with a number that most of us can agree on. Vote: 7-2 (Darlisa Ritter and Kathy Yolish voted nay.) Motion passed.

Chairman Holden stated there would be no need for a Special Meeting tomorrow and adjourned the meeting at 7:32 p.m.

Diane Luther

Diane Luther
Secretary to Board of Education
February 10, 2016