

**SHELTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF EDUCATION ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
382 LONG HILL AVENUE
DECEMBER 7, 2011**

Chairman Win Oppel called the Special Meeting of the Board of Education to order at 5:08 p.m.

Roll Call: (alpha order)
John Francino-Quinn (excused)
Mark Holden
Arlene Liscinsky, Secretary
Thomas Minotti, Vice Chairman
Win Oppel, Chairman
James Oraziatti
Mike Pacowta
Timothy Walsh (excused)
Kathleen Yolish

Quorum of 7 present; 2 absent

Board of Education Administration present:
Superintendent of Schools, Freeman Burr
Finance Director, Allan Cameron
Executive Director of Instruction & Support Services, Kathleen Bender

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Thomas Minotti moved to approve the agenda; seconded by Mark Holden; vote 7-0; motion passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Arlene Liscinsky moved to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting held on November 30, 2011, with one correction; seconded by Mark Holden; vote 4-0-3 (abstentions by Thomas Minotti, Kathy Yolish, James Oraziatti).

OLD BUSINESS

Continued Discussion of the Proposed 2012-13 Budget Estimate – In response to a previous request by Arlene Liscinsky, Superintendent Burr gave his findings of a review of a five-year history. He reported the following five year averages: Certified Salaries – \$275,000 surplus; Non-Certified Salaries - \$75,000 savings; Benefits - \$350,000 savings.

He said there were overages, particularly in the area of Program Improvement – \$500,000 attributable to out-of-district tuitions (special education and magnet obligations); and overspending in Administration, Transportation, Utilities, Heat, etc., most of which averages about \$180,000. He noted the combined totals average to a wash, although, on average, we have been about \$2,500 to the good. He said there are not major areas that have cost savings; any cost savings in Salaries is used to offset costs in Tuition and Programs. He noted the largest area of cost savings is in Health Benefits. He also said the budget to be presented does not include the closing of a grade 7 cluster, which he feels is inappropriate as it would raise class sizes for students transitioning from grade 6 to grade 7.

2012-13 Rollover Budget:

Superintendent Burr reviewed obligations for Teacher & Administrative Salaries (\$523,805 – of which about \$500,000 is relegated to the teacher contract); Non-Certified Salaries (\$241,157 – including cost estimates for Custodial, Secretarial negotiations, mediation and arbitration); Benefits (\$481,275 or 6% - which has been lowered from 8.03%); Transportation Contract (\$112,559 – final year of First Student contract and does not include going out to bid and incurring potential cost with a new vendor). Mr. Burr noted Retirements/Incentive savings (\$922,384 - including accumulated sick leave payouts and savings for 8 retirements). Allan Cameron explained how the projected number of retirements was derived, which was based on a review of more than five years to take into account those times an incentive was not offered. The total rollover amount is \$436,129, or 0.85%.

Principals'/Departments' Staffing Requests:

The cumulative requests were outlined. Mr. Burr explained that the reduction of 5 elementary teachers across the district is based on anticipated lower enrollment of 120 students in grades K-4. The requests for additional staff were reviewed.

Principals' Departments' Additional, Non-Staff Requests:

Superintendent Burr discussed the requests. He noted several items that he feels should be the combined responsibility of the Board of Education and Public Improvement Building Committee. Kathy Yolish questioned projects being planned over the summer and possible conflict with school cleaning. Freeman Burr stated there is a different approach this year for summer cleaning that will be presented at Building & Grounds. Mrs. Yolish asked if some of the items could be paid for with any money remaining this year. Mr. Opel said it would be possible to cover the expenses for some of the projects. James Oraziatti noted the high school chiller project is not included, which will cost \$500,000-\$600,000, less any grant money. Freeman Burr noted that the requests are for this budget year and would not include the chiller. Mr. Oraziatti suggested sharing information regarding upcoming projects with Bernie Simons, Chairman of Public Improvement Building Committee, for possible grant opportunities. There was additional discussion concerning replacement windows for Elizabeth Shelton School.

Superintendent's Program Improvement and Staffing Recommendations:

Freeman Burr reviewed his list of recommendations and how each would be funded. He explained that funding noted would not be new money.

Win Oppel said the state is bidding technology projects on a small basis and suggested looking into that as a way to stretch our dollars for our backlog of projects.

There was discussion of the responsibilities of guidance counselors. It was suggested that school counselors would be a better term rather than behavior management specialists. Mr. Burr noted that any adjustments to a job description or title would not be made unilaterally and would have to be discussed with the SEA.

Preliminary Recommended Budget:

Freeman Burr discussed his recommended 2012-13 budget of \$64,336,129, which represents an increase of 1.0%. As requested at the previous meeting, adjustments were made, and the new dollars needed was reduced from \$984,700 to \$636,129.

Win Oppel stated that nobody wanted to do Pay to Participate and asked what it would cost to eliminate it. Mr. Burr responded that based on this proposal, it would be reduced to about \$125,000, which is almost a third of what we started with. He said this is aligned with John Niski's request to lower the burden of Pay to Participate. Mr. Burr discussed measures currently being taken for financial hardship.

Mark Holden said he would like to see a more detailed budget to understand where the money is going. He specifically asked about the cost of telephones and was advised that Dana Urban and Cathy Araujo would be able to answer his questions concerning voiceover internet protocols as a way to save money or any other concerns he may have.

Superintendent Burr stated that he and Mayor Lauretti will continue to meet on the budget and that the Mayor expects us to be fiscally responsible, which we are with a 1% request.

Kathy Yolish asked what could be expected if there is a zero percent increase. Mr. Burr said it that were to happen, the notion of reducing or eliminating Pay to Participate would not happen. He said it is conceivable to eliminate a grade 7 cluster at SIS, but it's important to consider what kind of school system we want to have, especially as we compete with magnet schools and charter schools. He stated if there are more retirements, cost savings could increase. Mrs. Yolish asked what expected class size would be if we lose 5 elementary teachers. Freeman Burr responded that there could be up to 23 in some classes.

Win Oppel advised Board members to be prepared to vote to adopt the budget at the Special Meeting on December 14. There will be continued discussion at the Finance Committee meeting preceding the Board meeting.

Chairman Oppel recognized Dave Kopchik of 248 Nichols Avenue and allowed him to express his opinion as a parent that the Board should continue to advocate for better education and try not to cut any teachers.

Allan Cameron distributed copies of the Six Year Capital Improvement Plan, which will be discussed at the Finance Committee meeting on December 14, at 5:00 p.m. Chairman Oppel encouraged Board members to attend the Finance Committee meeting for continued budget discussion.

Adjournment

Arlene Liscinsky moved to adjourn at 6:26 p.m.; seconded by Kathy Yolish; vote 7-0; motion passed.

Diane Luther

Diane Luther

Recording Secretary – Board of Education

December 13, 2011