

# LYME-OLD LYME SCHOOLS

*Regional School District #18*

*A Private School Experience*



*in a Public School Setting*

## **District Budget Hearing**

April 1, 2019

*Board Present:* Michelle Roche, Chairwoman; Diane Linderman, Vice Chair; Jean Wilczynski, Treasurer; Martha Shoemaker, Secretary; Erick Cushman; Rick Goulding; Stacey Leonardo; Mary Powell St. Louis; Stacy Winchell

*Administration Present:* Ian Neviaser, Superintendent of Schools; Michelle Dean, Director of Curriculum; Melissa Dougherty, Director of Special Services; Holly McCalla, Business Manager; John Rhodes, Director of Facilities & Technology

*Others Present:* 20 Community Members from Lyme-Old Lyme

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Michelle Roche.

Martha Shoemaker read the call of the meeting as follows:

*Notice is hereby given that the Regional School Board for Regional School District No. 18 for the Towns of Lyme and Old Lyme will hold a public hearing on the budget request for the fiscal year July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 at Regional School District No. 18, Board of Education Conference Room at Center School, 49 Lyme Street, Old Lyme, Connecticut at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, April 1, 2019. All interested parties are invited to attend and present their comments or questions.*

Mr. Neviaser presented a summary of the 2019-2020 proposed budget. A copy of this presentation is attached to these minutes for informational purposes.

The meeting was opened up for questions and comments.

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A community member asked about the status of the savings incurred due to lower than anticipated bids for the preschool renovations. She asked if these monies could be used for classrooms for an expanded three-year-old preschool program. Mr. Neviasher explained their decision-making behind keeping the three-year-old program status quo, i.e., consideration for area daycare centers and having an option to house kindergarten students in the future should enrollment continue to grow.

Mona Colwell asked about the reduction in teaching time for the middle school music teacher. Mr. Neviasher explained how reductions in enrollment at the elementary level have caused the reduction at the middle school level due to the fact that the middle school teacher is the least senior employee in the area of music instruction.

Mona Colwell asked if the district has explored what other schools are doing with their music instruction and whether they considered expanding the music program vs. cutting. Mr. Neviasher discussed district budgeting and the inappropriateness of adding programs to retain staff.

Mona Colwell asked how the district's preschool program compared to those in the area. Mr. Neviasher discussed the merits of the Lyme-Old Lyme preschool program and the many benefits to the children of the district.

Mona Colwell asked for enrollment forecasts for the next five years. Mr. Neviasher reported that they are projecting slight increases every year but that it is always an educated guess based on many changing factors.

A community member voiced support for implementing a strings program in the music department. Mrs. Roche discussed the possibility of co-op programs with other districts.

A community member asked about the earlier statement by the Superintendent regarding moving kindergarten to Center School. Mr. Neviasher noted that they would need approximately 100 more students at the elementary level for this to occur and that an early childhood learning center would be driven by student enrollment.

A community member asked about the lottery for the 3-year-old program. Mr. Neviasher explained the peer visit model for this program and how peers are selected for gender balance and developmentally appropriate skills and abilities to enhance the preschool experience for all.

A community member asked about the improvements included in the budget for the middle school library. Mr. Neviasher noted that this included new carpeting, furniture, circulation desk, and removal of the interior staircase.

Harvey Gemme read a statement supporting the expansion of the preschool program. Mr. Gemme has three children attending district schools; he commended the school district for the education they are receiving.

A community member asked for the need behind a preschool program for four-year-olds citing the lack of evidence that students are not adequately prepared for kindergarten. She also asked why there were proposing an expenditure of \$400,000 for a program for 30 students. She suggested that this initiative be studied more before implementation. Mr. Neviasser made the following corrections to this statement: PreK program would be servicing over 60 students and that universal PreK has been studied by the administration and Board for a number of years. Mr. Neviasser discussed the smaller than anticipated cost for renovations, the small impact to the overall budget, and the vast discrepancies they are seeing in the preparation of the kindergarten students. Mr. Neviasser cited studies that show the benefits of preschool and the importance of making sure every student in the district has the opportunity to attend the preschool program.

A community member asked about after school care. Mr. Neviasser explained that this would not be part of the program but that area daycares are aware of this need for many families.

A community member asked what progressive programs were being implemented at the middle and high school level. Mr. Neviasser listed some of the newer initiatives at this level: SAT prep for all students; 17 AP course offerings; Pursuits Program at the middle school; and 1:1 technology for all students. Mrs. Roche noted that many of these programs are included as educational presentations at the monthly Board meetings. She encouraged the public to attend these meetings so they can learn about the expansive offerings at the schools.

A community member referred to an article that appear in *The Day* that stated that cuts would be made at the middle and high school level if the budget failed to pass at referendum. Mr. Neviasser made clarifications to the article noting that there would be no cuts to academics should they need to revisit the budget. Mrs. Roche commended Mr. Neviasser for his fiscal conservatism. She further explained the budget voting process and how the community is voting for a total budget figure; she also discussed the Board's lengthy decision-making behind many of the programs included in the budget.

Mona Colwell voiced concern that the preschool was not yet an approved program, was not properly vetted, and the Board was not listening to the public who opposed its inclusion in the budget.

A community member discussed the importance of attracting people to move to town and that she was in favor of controlled budget growth. She noted that she raised her children in this community because of the school system.

A community member stated that she moved to the community because of the school system and the music program. She voiced support for keeping Laura Gladd, music teacher at LOLMS, at full-time.

A community member asked if they could table the preschool program decision for a year giving them time to answer questions and create a curriculum. Mrs. Roche discussed the decision-making process that took place over the PreK program, the Board's support for its implementation, and the importance of providing the best education for all children.

Board Member Stacey Leonardo spoke as a parent of a child that attended the PreK program and how the program benefitted him greatly. She also noted that there is a PreK curriculum currently in place.

A community member asked about the status of a tennis coach. Mrs. Roche reported that the Board does not get involved in day to day personnel issues. Mr. Neviaser reported that the previous tennis coach left on his own accord.

A community member asked where the money that they saved in construction costs is spent. Mr. Neviaser explained the budgeting process with cost savings that occur during the year being returned to the towns as a credit for the next year's budget.

A community member asked about the trend of universal preschool within the state. Mr. Neviaser stated that he does not believe they will see it as a state mandate in the near future. At the local level: Westbrook is expanding their program; Old Saybrook and East Lyme are planning implementation in 2020-2021.

A community member voiced concern that the district might still experience some sort of regionalization with the proposed Looney legislation which she believed would be detrimental to the towns.

A community member inquired about the tuition slots for PreK attendance for non-residents. Mr. Neviaser reported that the proposed budget does not include outside students attending the program.

A community member asked if they can turn down tuition requests and the impact should non-residents have additional educational needs and require additional services. Mr. Neviaser explained that they can turn down tuition requests and that non-resident parents pay the additional costs.

A student read a statement detailing the importance of music in her life. She asked that the Board consider no cuts to the music, art, or physical education programs.

Mona Colwell inquired about the costs for tennis courts. Mr. Neviaser reported that the cost to renovate three courts will cost \$225,000. The intention is to fix six courts over a two budget cycle but with the work being done at one time for additional cost savings. Follow-up discussion centered on the decision to choose post tensioned courts vs. asphalt courts for durability and maintenance purposes.

A community member inquired about the turf field and related funding. Mr. Neviaser reported that the turf field is estimated to cost \$1.8 million and is under consideration because of the lack of water on the main campus. This project is not expected to be proposed for several years. Mr. Neviaser and Dr.

Goulding, Chair of the Facilities Committee, explained the undesignated fund which the district utilizes for funding roof projects and other large expenditures to eliminate large spikes in the operating budget and the need to bond projects. Money is placed (1% of budget surplus) in this account annually. Dr. Goulding also addressed the five-year facilities plan which addresses the different improvements planned over time throughout the district.

A community member asked how donations are accepted for facilities/grounds improvements. Mr. Neviaser explained that money is not actively solicited; the donation of the track field was from a family in honor of their sons' memory. Dr. Goulding explained how grants are aggressively sought and the importance of the Education Foundation who assist generously with donations to the schools.

A community member asked about health assessment of the turf field and the water study. Dr. Goulding explained that the controversial crumb rubber fill used on some turf fields was never considered for the turf field. In regards to the water situation on the main campus, they are tapping from a local pond to irrigate the fields. Mrs. Roche explained the work that goes into these initiatives, i.e., ad hoc committee formed to study the feasibility of a turf field.

Mona Colwell asked about the door jams at the middle school and why they were not being fixed vs. making improvements to the library media center. Mr. Neviaser explained the annual repairs that are made to the door jams and that their current condition is heightened due to the freeze/thaw cycle. The expenditure to fix the doors will be much more significant than what is being expended on the improvements to the library.

There were no further questions or comments from the public.

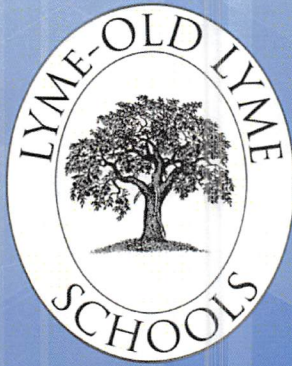
MOTION: Mrs. Shoemaker made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Linderman, that pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes, the vote on the budget for fiscal year July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 will be held on the day following the annual budget meeting in accordance with the procedures set forth in section 7-7 of the Statutes. The District Budget Meeting will be held on May 6, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. in the Board of Education Conference Room at Center School; the referendum will be held on May 7, 2019 from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Cross Lane Firehouse in Old Lyme and the Town Hall in Lyme.

VOTE: The Board voted in favor of the motion with a vote of eight in favor and one opposition by Dr. Powell-St. Louis. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m. upon motion by Dr. Goulding and a second by Mrs. Linderman.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Shoemaker, Secretary



## 2019-2020 Budget Proposal

### **Goals to be Served by the Budget**

To support the objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan by:

- Preserving and building upon the high standards of education in LOL while remaining fiscally responsible to our communities.
- Supporting the ongoing renewal of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and staff development activities in response to the expectations of state and national standards.
- Continuing to plan and provide technology infrastructure and applications that are consistent with highly effective and efficient programming and operational standards.
- Maintaining high facility standards for all district buildings and grounds.
- Maintaining a dynamic and responsive approach to programming needs and mandates in special education.
- Maintaining both compliance and reasonability in response to state and federal mandates.



## What is a budget?

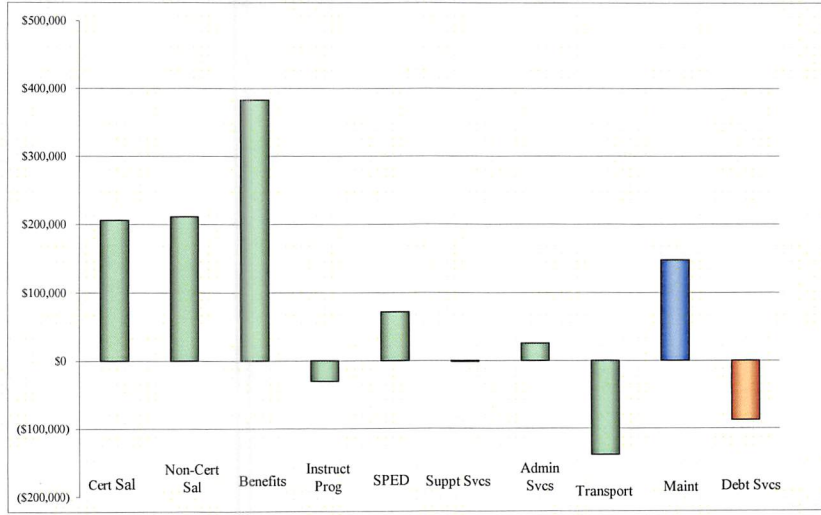
- Sec. 10-222. Appropriations and budget.** Each local board of education shall prepare **an itemized estimate** of the cost of maintenance of public schools for the ensuing year and shall submit such **estimate** to the board of finance in each town or city having a board of finance, to the board of selectmen in each town having no board of finance or otherwise to the authority making appropriations for the school district, not later than two months preceding the annual meeting at which appropriations are to be made.
- A BUDGET IS NOT ONLY A PLAN, IT IS A STATEMENT OF VALUES AND PRIORITIES**



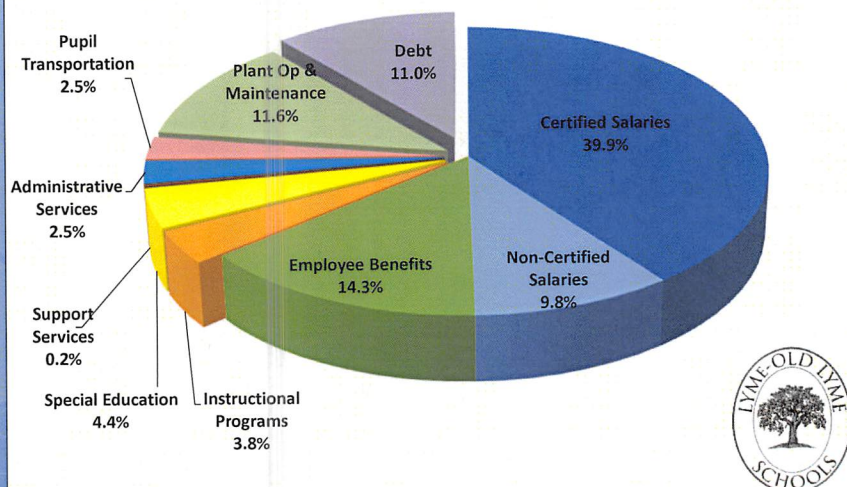
### Overall Budget Summary

BUDGET SUMMARY..... \$35,084,758					
	17-18 Actuals	18-19 Budget	19-20 Budget	\$ Increase or (Decrease)	% Inc or (Dec) by Line Item
Certified Salaries	\$13,826,085	\$13,787,269	\$13,993,148	\$205,879	1.49%
Non-certified Salaries	3,062,285	3,241,182	3,451,970	210,788	6.50%
Employee Benefits	4,134,945	4,623,005	5,005,802	382,797	8.28%
Instructional Programs	1,094,629	1,348,300	1,318,262	(30,038)	(2.23)%
Special Education	1,438,443	1,466,801	1,538,305	71,504	4.87%
Support Services	62,236	77,736	76,496	(1,240)	(1.60)%
Administrative Services	929,649	848,403	873,741	25,338	2.99%
Pupil Transportation	924,435	1,028,286	889,276	(139,010)	(13.52)%
Plant Op & Maintenance	3,687,754	\$3,917,933	\$4,065,858	147,925	3.78%
<b>OPERATING BUDGET</b>	<b>29,160,461</b>	<b>30,338,915</b>	<b>31,212,858</b>	<b>873,943</b>	<b>2.88%</b>
Debt Service	3,997,597	3,959,613	3,871,900	(87,713)	(2.22)%
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>\$33,158,058</b>	<b>\$34,298,528</b>	<b>\$35,084,758</b>	<b>\$786,230</b>	<b>2.29%</b>

### 2019-2020 Budget Drivers (Increase/Decrease)



### 2019-2020 Proposed Budget \$35,084,758 2.29% increase





## The operations/program budget reflects:

- Continued adherence to class size guidelines
- Reduction of staff to account for enrollment shifts
- Continuance of existing academic and extracurricular activities
- Adjustments for anticipated changes in the special education population
- Adequate funding for maintenance and repair of buildings and grounds
- Scheduled replacement of technology and equipment
- Program improvements that are consistent with high academic and operational standards



## Program Improvements:

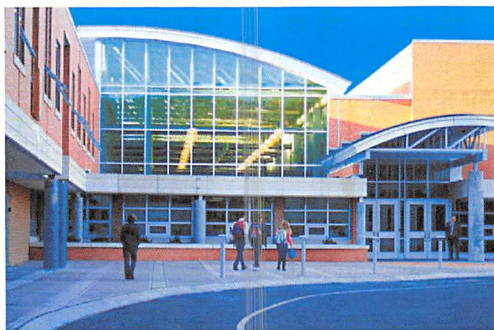
- Pre-K expansion
- 1:1 technology expansion K-12
- Updated NGSS materials
- Enhanced security



## Facilities Proposed Projects

Capital Projects (Operating Budget)	2019 – 2020 Operating Funds
Replace Three Tennis Courts	\$225,000
Pre K Expansion Classrooms	\$180,000
MS Media Center Partial Redesign and Carpet Replacement	\$45,000
LC Carpeting Replacement	\$12,000
<b>2019/2020 Project Totals</b>	<b>\$462,000</b>

Special Project (Non Operating Budget)	Funding Source
Solar Electric System Installation	Purchase Power Agreement



## What's next?

- Opportunity for public comment
- Board action on the proposed budget