



JOHN P. RACHEK
Chairman

STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

55 MAIN STREET – PO BOX 187
ELLINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06029-0187
www.ellington-ct.gov

DOUGLAS B. HARDING
Vice Chairman

BOARD OF FINANCE

PEGGY BUSSE
DAVID J. OLENDER
BARRY C. PINTO
JOSEPH E. WEHR

BUDGET HEARING MARCH 10, 2020

MINUTES

Members Present: John Rachek-Chair, Peggy Busse, Douglas Harding, David Olender, Barry Pinto, Joseph Wehr

Others Present: Lori Spielman-First Selectman, Dr. Scott Nicol-Supt. of Schools, Brian Greenleaf-Director of Finance & Ops., Kevin Kenzenkovic-Temp Finance Officer, Felicia LaPlante-Asst. Finance Officer, Brian Hendrickson-Dir. Educational Services, Kristy LaPorte-Dir. Special Services, BOE Members Gary Blanchette, Elizabeth Nord and Miriam Underwood, JI Reporter

1. Call to Order

Chairman John Rachek called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

MOVED (PINTO) SECONDED (OLENDER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADD AGENDA ITEM 4, AWARD CONTRACT FOR AUDITING SERVICES

3. Budget Hearing – Board of Education FY 2020-2021

Dr. Nicol began by listing some of the things that have transpired over the last 5 years; full day kindergarten, the Crystal Lake School project, Special programs, safety/security, outsourced food service, teacher positions added, feedback from parents being taken into account, and EDUinnovate grants received for innovative projects.

In the budget for 2020-21, there is a BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst) that is being funded through revenue. The total increase in the budget is 2.94%. For the five schools, there are 16 administrators which is on the lower side as compared to other school districts. The average budget increase over the last 5 years has been 3%. The pressures on the District are School Choice, State Mandates, Stakeholder Advocacy, complex classrooms, school safety, and growth versus investment (per pupil spending). There are currently 2,676 students; the percentage of diversity is 25.47% and is rising. Ellington is still on the bottom of the per pupil spending chart but through the efforts of those in the school system gets a good investment for the funds spent. The overall budget has two fewer positions, the district restructuring is budget neutral and the additional staff in this budget is funded through the revenue account.

The major drivers to the budget are salaries and benefits, outside tuition and technology and operations. Revenue has increased over the last 5 year which helps to keep the budget increases down. Revenues are from the Choice students tuition whose transportation is paid by the State through CREC, and the Eclipse Program that generates revenues from students from other districts coming into the program. The total revenues projected for the 2020-21 budget year is \$11,816,231. The ECS in the Governor's budget is \$9,946,889 which is higher than it has been in the past due to a correction in the formula.

The staffing wish list amounts to \$536,500, and Dr. Nicol pointed out that the district is in need of an HR Coordinator but it is not in this budget.

Brian Greenleaf continued the presentation stating that the salary and benefits portion of the budget is 2.83% of the increase and comprises over 81% of the budget. 12 teachers took steps in the 2020-21 budget which is high because the average for a year is 5.25. There is lower than average number of retirements anticipated this coming year.

Long term solutions to reduce costs are insurance self-funding; the dental is already self-funded. Funds would need to be set aside in a reserve account to self-fund the Health Insurance. As far as the dental being self-funded, the Town may want to look into joining on with the BOE. FICA for seasonal and part time employees, funds would be put into a 457 plan instead of payroll tax being paid. Health insurance premium increase is 6% which is down from prior years. The premiums for the property and workers compensation insurance have decreased. For utility costs, the electric generation rate increased 14%, some loans for lighting projects are coming off the books and solar projects help with distribution costs.

Transportation costs are steady, Special Ed tuition has increased \$65,000. The revenue producing programs are limited to the facilities. New facilities include startup costs. Cyber security is in place.

Dr. Nicol concluded by stating that the department heads are moving and working together to create budgets that will pass. They feel they have a good working relationship with the Town Administration as well.

Mr. Wehr asked about the student population projections in the last two studies and how comfortable the Board of Education is with the growth projections being accurate. Brian Greenleaf stated that growth over the past years has not increased too much but that the kindergarten enrollment currently is the 3rd highest of the last 10. Dr. Nicol told the Board that there is a school enrollment policy that says that the Board has the right to place children of new residents into any school the district chooses. They are sorted by the numbers to keep the classrooms from being overfilled. He also pointed out that flat enrollment is better than decreased enrollment as is with many towns in Connecticut.

Ms. Busse wanted to confirm that the budget increase is not related to growing population. Mr. Greenleaf confirmed that it is due to maintenance of efforts, salaries and benefits. Dr. Nicol stated that if the student populations were to change, the teachers would be moved to accommodate it as necessary.

4. Award Contract for Auditing Services

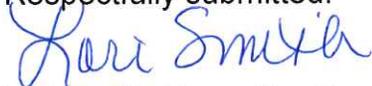
Mr. Kenzenkovic told the Board that 12 RFP's were sent out and two were received. They were scored and the firm selected was based on their local presence and staff numbers in Connecticut as well as the Connecticut communities they serve. He is recommending Blum, Shapiro & Co.

MOVED (HARDING) SECONDED (OLENDER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO AWARD THE CONTRACT FOR AUDITING SERVICES TO BLUM, SHAPIRO & COMPANY, P.C. OF WEST HARTFORD, CT AS RECOMMENDED BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF FINANCE AND THE FIRST SELECTMAN. THE TERM OF THE CONTRACT SHALL BE FOR A ONE YEAR PERIOD WITH THE TOWN HAVING THE OPTION TO RENEW FOUR ADDITIONAL ONE-YEAR TERMS.

Adjournment

MOVED (HARDING) SECONDED (OLENDER) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted:



Lori Smith, Recording Secretary

