




TOWN CLERK
SUFFIELD, CT

2025 APR -7 PM 4: 04

Town of Suffield
Board of Finance (BOF)
Town Hall 1st Floor Conference Room
83 Mountain Road, Suffield, CT

REC'D BY: 

Monday, March 31, 2025 – 7:00 pm Budget Review Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Eric Harrington, Chris Childs, Dr. Ann Huntington, Brian Kost, and Mark Sinopoli

Members Absent: Michael Haines **Alternates Present:** Arthur Christian II, Tom Frenaye, and Mark Englander **Alternates Absent:** None

Also Present: Finance Director Amanda Moore and First Selectman Colin Moll

1. Chair Harrington called the budget review meeting to order at 7:04 pm.
2. Chair Harrington conducted the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Citizen comment/Correspondence – Victoria Copes – 233 Hickory Street – Ms. Copes thanked the Board of Education and Board of Finance for their commitment to the children of Suffield. She expressed concern over the proposed budget increase of 7% and the significant budgetary gap for educating children.
Mr. Childs spoke of an email from Jason Neely – 1189 Mapleton Avenue which was sent to the Board regarding the school librarian.
4. Budget Review
 - a. Board of Education – Business Manager Eric Remington, Superintendent Matthew Dunbar, and Board of Education Chair Maureen Sattan presented the proposed FY 26 budget. BOE Chair Sattan thanked Mr. Kost and Mr. Englander for their work as liaisons to the BOE. The proposed budget is \$42,275,929, an increase of 7.03% over the current year (6.59% with a special revenue offset). Ms. Sattan reported the budget is tight, with no areas of significant contingency, and small changes in assumptions will have a significant impact throughout the year. The budget includes a 20% increase in health insurance costs and a reduction of six full-time employees with no offsetting increase in positions. The budget includes a 5.94% increase in gross spending, with a decrease in grant revenue due to the loss of a high-cost outplaced choice student. Education revenue, including those received directly by the Town, are flat. The ECS grant from the State, which goes to the town, is projected to be 2.1% lower than it was in FY 17. Superintendent Dunbar discussed the challenges in negotiating settlements with teachers and support staff unions, resulting in salary increases that remain below average but are necessary to stay competitive. A reduction in the personnel turnover vacancy factor has added \$100,000 to the budget due to fewer retirements. The district has reduced five certified and one non-certified staff positions, saving over \$650,000. Superintendent Dunbar gave details of the impact of a 20% health insurance premium increase and the challenges in special education funding, including the state's excess cost reimbursement of 75%. There are ongoing discussions at the state level regarding special education costs. Business Manager Remington discussed the focus on the increasing trend of special education identification in Connecticut schools, with Suffield's rate rising from 13.4% to 15.1% over six years, still below the state average of 17.3%. Superintendent Dunbar explained that while the number of special education students has grown, teaching staff has remained relatively stable, with an increase in paraprofessionals to meet student needs cost effectively. The district's enrollment has declined by 15% over the past decade but is projected to increase over the next ten years. Concerns about teacher shortages were discussed, noting that while overall student numbers have decreased, finding qualified teachers has become more challenging, especially in certain subject areas. Ms. Sattan noted that a \$92,000 reduction in

These minutes are not official until accepted at a subsequent meeting.

calculated other post-employment benefits (OPEB) contribution is not included in the budget and could be applied to help with decisions by the BOF. Also, the BOE is willing to consider utilizing their non-lapsing fund if the BOF reduces the request. The agriscience program was discussed, which is close to capacity with 90 out-of-district students.

- b. General Budget Discussion – Chair Harrington asked for Finance Director Moore to provide the Board with the current Mill Rate estimate sheet with everything presented to-date. The Board will review and make decisions on the overall budget over the next 1-2 weeks.

5. Mr. Kost made a motion to adjourn. Dr. Huntington seconded. All in favor and the meeting adjourned at 8:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Connie Irwin
Recording Secretary