

**GUILFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION
TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2005
GUILFORD HIGH SCHOOL, GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT**

BUDGET WORKSHOP MEETING SUMMARY

Present: William Bloss, Keith Bishop, William Dwyer, Kathleen Nolan,
Greg Muccilli, James Ralls, Sandra Whelan (Richard Beatty joined the
meeting in progress)

Barbara Truex, Anne Keene, Andy Potochney, Linda Trudeau, Catherine
Walker, Nancy Bishop, Merry Leventhal, Joseph Onofrio

Chairwoman Whelan called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. Chairwoman Whelan stated that this is an opportunity for the public to address the Board regarding the 2005-06 proposed budget. Chairwoman Whelan noted that there are very few members of the public present and that the GCTV cameraman was not present due to a scheduling confusion. She added that if there is no school and the school buildings are closed on January 26 due to the weather, the BOE would postpone the second public budget workshop to Tuesday, February 1.

Chairwoman Whelan asked members of the public to address the Board with their questions/comments. After several attempts to coax the community members present to speak, Joe Petrowski addressed the Board with several questions beginning with how state and federal dollars are being returned to the budget.

Mr. Potochney stated that there are some grant funds that come directly to the BOE; however, the majority go to the town. Mr. Potochney reviewed the process stating that the entitlement grants for special education and some various other title grants are returned to the BOE and reduce the BOE budget. The Excess Cost Grant for special education comes directly to the BOE budget and reduces our budget. The Educational Cost Sharing, which is the largest grant, goes to the town along with the Transportation Grant. Also, any grants for school building projects that reduce the bonding all go to the town.

Mr. Petrowski stated that it is misleading because the BOE is showing the expense but not the income to show the reduction. Mr. Bloss agreed with him. Mr. Potochney pointed out that if you look at the overall budget for the town including the BOE, you will see the ECS is shown as coming back. It comes back to the taxpayers either way.

Mr. Petrowski questioned why site improvement was reduced by \$41,000. Mr. Potochney stated it was based on the various projects the facilities staff have scheduled. The facilities staff feel that these are the ones that they believe are imperative that we do now and get into the process for next year.

Mr. Petrowski questioned the increase to the substitute account. Mr. Potochney explained that there has been an increase in long-term maternity leaves and other medical leaves. Funds are also included for interns that we have been using to address the class size issue.

Luca Rastelli questioned whether the world language program is going to be expanded and more staff added. Mrs. Truex stated that there are currently no new positions in this proposed budget. Two world language teachers were added this year and right now we are monitoring and adjusting the program at Baldwin. The Department Chairperson will bring recommendations to the BOE in February recommending how we might move the program forward to ultimately create a 5-8 sequential program for the students. It will continue to evolve each year.

Mr. Dwyer added that with the early retirement program taking effect, the Board may have the ability to move some positions around because of the retirements.

Mr. Bloss stated that he is troubled about having an in depth discussion without the camera being present so the general public can hear the Board's discussion.

Chairwoman Whelan explained the budget process stating that right now it is the Board's job to look at the budget and ask the questions and see if there are areas that we would like the Superintendent to reduce or add to.

Mr. Potochney added that the BOE has to have the budget available for publication by approximately February 11. It will be presented to the BOF on February 23. The BOF will hold a public hearing on March 8 and then have two workshops on March 10 and March 14. The referendum is tentatively scheduled for April 26.

Mr. Bishop emphasized that the BOE would like to hear from community regarding the percent of the proposed budget increase and what programs the Board should retain or eliminate since it helps the BOE to make decisions. He added that some new programs have been suggested by various groups. In order add new programs, something else might have to be eliminated.

Margaret Fikrig stated that she would like to think that parents are better mobilized now and recommends the BOE try to start with a large percent increase in hopes that every parent that is disappointed by cuts that we have faced in the past years will come to the referendum to vote. Chairwoman Whelan encouraged her to also voice her recommendation to the Board of Finance.

Mr. Petrowski stated that the Board ought to go along with the early retirement and realize our savings and not add any new positions. He suggested also putting a moratorium on new programs.

Mr. Dwyer stated that he believes it is the consensus of the Board to use the money saved from the early retirement to lower the total increase in the budget.

Mr. Rastelli questioned how we can try to get higher reimbursement from the state, particularly for rising special education costs.

Mr. Bloss stated that our legislators have been invited to tomorrow night's public hearing to discuss the status of some of the bills they have proposed to change the reimbursement rates. They have introduced legislation to increase both the ECS grant and the special education grant from the state.

Mr. Petrowski questioned how the bonding issue will be addressed. Mr. Potochney stated that the following items are being recommended to BOE/BOF for bonding: replacements of the Baldwin roof and skylights, repair/replacement of several roof sections at GHS, and replacement of stadium bleachers at GHS. The projects total \$1.6 million. Mr. Potochney noted that it is the BOF's decision as to what gets put in a bonding package. Mrs. Truex added that the Standing Building Committee recommended the roof at Baldwin be replaced not repaired thus resulting in the increased cost.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Dwyer and seconded by Mr. Beatty, the Board voted unanimously to add an Executive Session for Personnel.

Public questions continued. Mr. Petrowski questioned why Leete, as one of the smallest buildings, is one of the most expensive to heat.

Mr. Bishop stated that is one of the things the Facilities Task Force is looking at as far as the efficiency of the windows at Leete. Mrs. Truex added there are old boilers at Leete. They are on the list as part of a new HVAC replacement system at Leete that the Facilities Task Force is also looking at.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Dwyer and seconded by Mr. Ralls, the Board voted unanimously to go into Executive Session for Personnel at 8:10 p.m.

The Board returned from Executive Session and adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Terri M. Fiondella
Clerk to the Board of Education