

**GUILFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2008  
GUILFORD HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY, GUILFORD, CT**

**1. Call to Order**

Chairman Bill Bloss called the meeting to order at 7:53 p.m. Board members present were Bill Bloss, Lou Iorio, Alan Meyers, Ted Zuse, Keith Bishop, Barbara Dudley, Linda Sanacora and Mary Beeman.

Administrators present were Anne Keene and Tom Forcella. Also present was Accounting Manager Linda Trudeau and Business Administrator Andy Potochney.

**2. ACT ON the FY 2008-2009 Budget**

Chairman Bloss stated that the Board held public hearings on the Budget on January 28 and 29 and also met with the district's principals to discuss their needs for the 2008-2009 school year.

Dr. Forcella recommended the following decreases to the 2008-09 Budget:

Medical Insurance:	(\$326,000)
Retirement/Sick Pay:	(\$50,000)
Equipment Non Instructional:	(\$134,000)
Site Improvements	
Carpet/Tile:	(\$25,000)
Architect Fees	(\$25,000)
Jones Wells - (to bonding)	(\$50,000)
Building and Grounds	<u>(\$20,000)</u>
Total Decrease:	(\$630,000)

Dr. Forcella noted the following increase based, in part on the requests from parents at the Budget public hearings:

Speech Pathologist in Pre-K	(\$16,000)
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The initial proposed 2008-09 Budget was \$49,019,698 representing a 7.43% increase over the 2007-2008 Budget. The adjusted proposed 2008-2009 Budget is \$48,385,968 representing an increase of 6.08%.

Dr. Forcella added that the one additional reduction that could be considered in the current proposal would be the elimination of the new phone system at Baldwin at a cost of \$60,000. If this item were removed from the proposed Budget, the net increase would then be 5.95% and the proposed Budget would be \$48,325,968.

There was discussion about potentially bonding the phone system at Baldwin. Mr. Potochney advised against this.

The Board discussed the revised decrease in medical benefits. Mr. Potochney explained that the initial Budget was developed prior to a meeting with Anthem where the company presented the district's projected costs lower than anticipated.

Dr. Forcella responded to Mrs. Beeman's question about adding a substance abuse counselor at the high school explaining that, while the need exists, the current Budget focuses on increasing the support services at the elementary school level to meet IEP requirements for early intervention.

Chairman Bloss asked if the tuition increase for The Sound School is based on current enrollments.

Mr. Potochney confirmed that it is and that the tuition includes both special education and regular education. Mr. Bishop asked for a breakdown between the two groups.

Chairman Bloss asked about the importance of the new technician position proposed in the Budget. Dr. Forcella responded that one of the main goals of the new technology plan is to increase access to technology. Without the technical support on hand, teachers can become frustrated and equipment can remain unused or under-utilized. Currently there is one technician for the four elementary schools. The proposal is to add one additional technician for the elementary schools.

Chairman Bloss asked what the impact would be on the Budget to expand the implementation of the technology plan to six years. Mr. Potochney explained that the financial impact would not be that great, approximately \$15,000 - \$20,000 in debt service.

Dr. Forcella noted that the district is already trying to catch up technologically and if the plan were delayed, we would fall further behind.

Mr. Zuse added that he believes that the technology initiative will have a great impact on learning and the effective utilization of the hardware and software by students and staff will require appropriate technical support.

Chairman Bloss asked for an explanation for the large increase in special education transportation costs. Mr. Potochney explained that the Pupil Services Department looks for the lowest cost providers for transportation and has identified three different vendors for specific transportation needs. He noted that the transportation costs also include aides to accompany some of the students on the buses.

Mr. Zuse asked about the potential to ride share with other districts. Dr. Forcella stated that the Pupil Services Department has talked to Madison and Branford and that they could expand these inquiries to other towns.

Mr. Zuse asked that the Board review the requests made by parents during the public hearings on the Budget and report on the status of those requests.

Dr. Forcella confirmed that there will be an increase in speech and language pathology services at Adams and in the Pre-K program as requested by parents.

Mr. Zuse noted the concern expressed regarding the summer special education program. Dr. Forcella explained that the needs for this program will be addressed.

Mr. Zuse noted the concern expressed about a perceived decrease in professional development for special education staff. Dr. Forcella explained that there has not been a decrease in this area; that the funds are included in the district professional development line item.

Mr. Zuse also asked about the systematic, multi-sensory, phonetically-based comprehensive reading program that had been requested. Dr. Forcella explained that if there is a need for a specific program for a specific child with special needs, there will be funds available to meet those needs.

Mrs. Dudley addressed the comments made by parents to eliminate study halls at Baldwin. She stated that there are many activities that take place during study halls including the following: music lessons, tone chimes, resource help, homework help, tutoring, make-up work, study groups, free reading and work on research projects.

Dr. Meyers asked if it is possible to use some of the money in the student activity fund for site improvements related to athletics. Mr. Potochney explained that state statutes require that these funds be used for student-related needs. He noted that the GHS Athletic Director, Chip Dorwin, recommends uses for these funds and submits these recommendations for approval by the principal.

Chairman Bloss added that the auditors of the Board's financial statements have never questioned or commented on the administration of the student activity fund.

Mr. Bishop noted that the final payment of \$556,000 for the early retirement offered in 2005 is in the current 2007-08 Budget. He asked how the \$150,000 increase in retirement reserves was derived. Mr. Potochney responded that this figure was based on the number of retirements from last year and adjusted for average salary increases.

Upon a motion made by Dr. Meyers and seconded by Mr. Zuse, the Board voted unanimously to approve the \$48,385,968 proposed 2008-09 Budget presented by Dr. Forcella less a further reduction of \$60,000 discussed by the Board this evening resulting in a \$48,325,968 proposed 2008-09 Budget to forward to the Board of Finance. Chairman Bloss noted that this proposed Budget represents a 5.95% increase over the 2007-08 Budget.

Mr. Bishop stated he would prefer that the \$60,000 reduction be credited to the general account instead of specifically to the phone system at Baldwin. Dr. Forcella stated that it is important to identify which items will be addressed, but also noted that if the phone system were to break down during the school year, funds would need to be reapportioned to address this need.

Chairman Bloss noted that the Board will consider recommending the bonding of an HVAC system at Adams and roofs at A.W. Cox at the February 11, 2008, regular meeting.

Upon a motion made by Mrs. Dudley and seconded by Dr. Iorio, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Lorri Hahn  
Clerk to the Board of Education