

**GUILFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2010
GUILFORD HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY, GUILFORD, CT**

1. Call to Order

Chairman Bloss called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m. Board members present were Bill Bloss, Keith Bishop, Chris Moore, Barbara Dudley, Mary Beeman, Ted Zuse and Susan Renner.

Administrators present were Tom Forcella, Anne Keene, Nancy Bishop, Catherine Walker, Paula McCarthy, and Rick Misenti.

2. ACT ON FY 2010-2011 Budget

Chairman Bloss reviewed the development process for the 2010-2011 Budget including the opportunities for public input at the January 25 and 26 budget hearings.

Mrs. Dudley stated that she heard the concerns of special education parents regarding the proposed reduction of two special education coordinators. She said she understood the concern about the pressure this will place on classroom teachers and principals to manage IEPs.

Dr. Forcella acknowledged that the special education coordinator issue was the most common concern. He stated that the district will be able to use savings in ARRA grant money to fund one of the special education coordinator positions for 2010-2011, thus reducing the number of special education coordinators by one instead of two. He noted that next year the district will need to evaluate these positions again as the grant money will only be available for the coming year.

Dr. Forcella also noted that the ARRA stimulus money can be used to rehire this position as it was slated to be eliminated.

Dr. Moore asked if the resources including computers and software from the Music Technology program at Adams might continue to be utilized.

Dr. Forcella stated that the equipment, etc. might be used in an after school program that might be piloted next year and potentially funded in subsequent years if the interest level is there.

Mrs. Dudley asked if GPS staff members might be surveyed to find out about potential plans to retire.

Dr. Forcella stated that it might be possible to inform staff that they would still be eligible for an early retirement plan, should one be introduced after they have announced their retirement plans. He noted that having an understanding of those retiring would be helpful this year with the proposed elimination of staff positions.

Discussion continued about a potential early retirement plan.

Mr. Potochney noted that the district's health care contribution will need to be increased \$201,000 from the original amount budgeted. He identified seven areas revised in the budget to offset this increase as follows:

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School Lunch Program – contribution to benefits:	(\$100,000)
Electricity	(\$ 20,000)
Unemployment	(\$21,000)
Building and Grounds	(\$35,000)
Security	(\$15,000)
Legal	(\$5,000)
Postage	(\$5,000)

Mr. Zuse asked Mr. Potochney about the proposed reduction in energy costs of \$150,000.

Mr. Potochney noted that the district did not use all of the oil it contracted for in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 which will result in a decrease for 2010-2011.

Chairman Bloss asked about the “pay for play” concept for athletic?

Dr. Forcella responded that he believes it is better to consider this option when the economy is stronger. He does not believe in further penalizing families experiencing financial difficulties by asking them to pay for their children’s participation in school sports. He noted that the individual charges for participation would need to be substantial to gain significant revenue that would have an impact on the budget.

Mr. Bishop suggested that the administration continue to study possible ways to keep a non-traditional music program at Adams.

Mr. Bishop suggested that bus routes for the high school be examined based on the low ridership.

Mr. Bishop suggested increasing student parking fees at the high school and considering an electronic card system to monitor parking.

Mr. Bishop expressed concern that continued reductions to maintenance budgets for facilities will result in larger expenses in the long term.

Mr. Bishop asked if the electronic attendance system for staff saves time.

Dr. Forcella responded that the system allows for quick and accurate reporting.

Mr. Bishop suggested that the high school consider an automated attendance system.

Mr. Zuse stated that he does not want to reduce the proposed education budget any further and is comfortable with the 2.8% increase.

Chairman Bloss reviewed the list of proposed staff reductions as follows:

- 2 Maintenance/Custodial
- 7 Paraeducators
- 6.1 Certified
- 1 Administrator
- 1 Secretary

Chairman Bloss reviewed the proposed increase in health insurance of \$201,000 and explained that \$100,000 of this increase will be offset by contributions from food service.

Dr. Forcella discussed the proposed instructional coaches to focus on literacy in the four elementary schools. He stated that the district should realize long-term savings with this early intervention strategy with less students needing special education services. He noted that this initiative supports the RTI (Response to Intervention) model. He noted that the coaches will be hired with money reallocated from administrative salaries.

Dr. Moore noted that the district continues to build a deficit in supplies and materials and questioned how much longer this can continue.

Mr. Zuse stated that school districts should allocate at least 1.5% of the value of their school facilities annually for maintenance and upkeep.

Dr. Moore suggested that our facilities need assessment planning.

Dr. Forcella agreed but stated that assessment planning will require money not currently allocated in the proposed budget.

Dr. Moore reminded the public about the concessions teachers made in the 2009-2010 budget.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Zuse and seconded by Mrs. Dudley, the Board unanimously in favor of forwarding the proposed budget to the Board of Finance, noting the adjustments made to seven categories.

Mrs. Beeman read a statement from Mr. Ireland. Mr. Ireland stated that he supports the proposed education budget and believes that it represents the minimum funds needed to meet our goals.

Mr. Zuse stated that any further reductions to the proposed budget will result in more staff cuts.

Dr. Moore stated that programs and staff that are eliminated will take years to get back.

Mrs. Dudley stated that the District Leadership Team and Dr. Forcella have done a thorough job in developing the budget. She acknowledged the difficult situation of staff losing jobs. She stated that supporting the budget is an issue of trust that the right decisions have been made. She stated the importance of the budget passing the first time and urged people to vote.

Mrs. Renner stated that she is not insensitive to the loss of jobs but is excited about the budget and the district's commitment to classroom instruction.

Mr. Bishop expressed confidence that the progress the district has made under Dr. Forcella's leadership will continue.

Mrs. Beeman expressed her support for the budget and encouraged the public to do the same.

Chairman Bloss stated that the proposed increases in the budget are \$1.3 million and are attributed primarily to increases in benefit costs and the reduction of funding from the Excess Cost Grant.

Chairman Bloss noted that Guilford spends significantly less per pupil than most towns in Connecticut.

Chairman Bloss reviewed achievements in the school district in recent years including the increasing test scores, World Language program, smaller class sizes and increases in participation in AP classes.

Chairman Bloss acknowledged the concerns over the condition of some of the school facilities but noted that the budget is operational and does not include funding for design or plans for new buildings.

Chairman Bloss noted that State revenue has dropped and Guilford is relying more heavily on property taxes.

Chairman Bloss expressed gratitude to the administration and Dr. Forcella and noted that the Board will present the education budget to the Board of Finance on February 16, 2010. He also noted that the Board of Finance will hold a public hearing on the budget on March 2.

3. Act On Selection Committee for RFQ

Dr. Forcella explained that Mr. Ireland has recommended that representatives from several town committees including the Board of Education serve on the selection committee to review the Requests for Qualifications from the architectural firms and recommend the finalist to submit design proposals.

Mr. Bishop suggested that the Board of Education Chair appoint the selection committee.

Mr. Zuse noted that the RFQ process is only a request for qualifications and does not require that money be expended by the Town.

Mr. Bishop reviewed the RFQ process stating that once the finalists are selected they will receive a Request for Proposal to submit a design proposal.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Zuse and seconded by Dr. Moore, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Lorri Hahn
Clerk to the Board of Education