

MINUTES  
BOARD OF FINANCE  
April 24, 2017

A SPECIAL JOINT MEETING of the Board of Finance and Board of Education was held in the City Hall Auditorium on Monday, April 24, 2017. Present were Mayor Elinor Carbone, Board of Finance Members Mark Bushka, JoAnn Fenty, Joshua Ferreira, Christopher Anderson and Frank Rubino, along with Board of Education Members William Knight, Armand Maniccia, Joanne Brogis, Ellen Hoehne, Fiona Cappabianca, Jessica Richardson and Wendy Pataky. Superintendent of Schools Denise Clemons, TECC Outreach Coordinator Donna Labbe, Director of Student Services LeTanya Lawrence, Director of Business Services Jerry Domanico, Assistant Superintendent Susan Lubomski, Director of Human Resources Joseph Campolieta, and City Comptroller Alice Proulx were also present. Board of Finance Member Laurene Pesce and Board of Education Members Daniel Thibault and Kenneth Traub were absent.

Mayor Carbone called the meeting to order at 6:18 p.m. starting with the Pledge of Allegiance.  
FY 2017/2018 Board of Education Budget

Superintendent Clemons presented the proposed budget with a 3.62% increase to the general budget, or a 2.54% increase with the inclusion of the capital budget. She noted that enrollment has been decreasing by 300 students over the past four years, while the free/reduced lunch counts have increased by 164 students during that time. Supt. Clemons said the number of English Language Learners and Special Education Students has increased, as well as the cost of employee benefits and the operating budget. She said Torrington spends \$16,361 per pupil, and the proposed \$74,537,790 budget is composed of 73.36% salaries and benefits, with 26.64 left to educate students. Based on this budget, Supt. Clemons said there will be a slight increase to class enrollment, with equity throughout the schools. She reviewed the 5-year historical grant awards, as well as revenue information and projections for 2017/2018.

Chairman Cappabianca noted that the only way to bring a zero-increase budget forward would be to close a school, and that we have to decide as a community whether to renovate or close East School.

Mr. Ferreira said that not increasing the mill rate is very important to grow the tax base. Members discussed proposed budget cuts that would bring the budget down to zero.

Mr. Rubino said the Board of Education did their due diligence and created a well-designed flow of cuts.

Mr. Anderson thanked the Board for the list of proposed cuts saying it shows that city officials are doing everything they can to evaluate and prioritize, should the revenue numbers not be what we need them to be.

Mayor Carbone noted that while the student enrollments are projected to decrease over the next nine years, the age 65 and older population is projected to increase by 40%. Who is going to be able to afford to stay here and pay for that education becomes the problem, she said. Mayor Carbone reminded everyone that we are losing 3.5 million dollars in revenue because of the State's Motor Vehicle Mill Rate Cap.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Ferreira, seconded by Mrs. Fenty, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:28 p.m.

MINUTES - PUBLIC HEARING  
BOARD OF FINANCE  
April 24, 2017

A PUBLIC HEARING was held by the Board of Finance in the City Hall Auditorium on Monday, April 24, 2017, to solicit citizen input and comments on the Board of Education Budget.

Mayor Carbone called the Public Hearing to order at 7:31 p.m.

Asst. City Clerk Carol Anderson read the legal notice.

Veronica Gelormino, a Torrington Middle School Teacher from Harwinton, voiced her concerns about budget cuts, saying that programs need to remain in place to keep students in Torrington Schools. She noted that crowded classrooms are smelly and potentially unsafe. Ms. Gelormino said Torrington Teachers go above and beyond for their students, and the students need to be prepared for college, for careers and for becoming civically engaged.

Jason LaFreniere, a Torrington Middle School Teacher from Simsbury, said he served as a Teacher Representative on the Budget Committee and that there is no money anywhere. He pointed out that we are trying to put a budget together without State revenue information. He said Torrington needs to bring out-placed students back into the District, and an initial investment in the school system is necessary to make that happen. Mr. LaFreniere said that regional programs, shared services, and other changes need to be made. Mayor Carbone explained that a recently completed feasibility study on shared services will be available within the next 30 days.

Mr. LaFreniere asked if multi-family homes are taxed equitably and if expelled students' education is properly budgeted for.

David Hayes of Torrington, a Bristol Teacher and President of the Bristol Teachers' Union, noted that younger residents who are going to stay and grow the town for decades may be preferred to the elderly. He urged the Boards to be fair to Torrington Teachers, even if taxes are raised.

Mayor Carbone replied that the Superintendent of Schools is collaborating with the City on the 'Working Cities Challenge' to identify strategies that will keep our young people here. While we want to be a vibrant community with growth potential for businesses, she said, we also have to recognize that there is a significant population that has lived here and supported this community all their lives.

Tabitha Oates of Torrington, a parent of three, asked where the budget information can be found. She said her taxes have increased \$2000 since 2012 and with zero-increase budgets, she would like to know where her tax dollars are being spent. Mrs. Oates noted that her daughter's Social Studies book is dated 1986, the same book she herself used. Mayor Carbone explained where the budget is on the website.

Carissa LaForge of Torrington, a young homeowner, said the lack of support for the Special Education programs her 2 children are in is difficult to witness. She said a lot of students need more help than they can get, and she appreciates the fact that Torrington Teachers try harder than others she has seen.

With no further members of the public wishing to speak, Mayor Carbone closed the Public Hearing to order at 7:52 p.m.

ATTEST: JOSEPH L. QUARTIERO, CMC  
CITY CLERK

Carol L. Anderson, MCTC, MMC  
Asst. City Clerk