

MINUTES

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BOARD OF FINANCE

BOARD OF EDUCATION

SPECIAL MEETING

CITY HALL AUDITORIUM/ZOOM

APRIL 25, 2023

A **SPECIAL JOINT MEETING** of the Board of Finance and the Board of Education was held on Tuesday, April 25, 2023. Present at City Hall were Mayor Carbone, City Clerk Carol Anderson, Torrington Public Schools (TPS) Superintendent Susan Lubomski, Treasurer Dan Farley, Board of Finance Members James Wright, Christopher Beyus, Mark Bushka, Laurene Pesce, Deborah Iannacito, and Board of Education members Fiona Cappabianca, John Kissko, Ellen Hoehne, Ed Corey, Jeff Putnam, Gary Eucalitto, Susan DePretis, and Glenn Burger. Board of Finance Member Christopher Anderson and Comptroller Robin Stanziale joined via Zoom. Board of Education Member Cathleen Todor was absent.

Mayor Carbone called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

TPS PROPOSED OPERATING, CAPITAL, GENERAL FUND, AND GRANT FUND BUDGET: 2023-2024

On a motion by Mr. Beyus, seconded by Mr. Bushka, the Board voted unanimously to open the meeting for discussion on the Torrington Public Schools Budgets for the fiscal period from July 1, 2023, to June 20, 2024.

Mr. Anderson joined via Zoom at 6:12 p.m.

Superintendent Lubomski presented the proposed budget for the Torrington Public Schools for the fiscal period from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024. She highlighted some of the major factors driving the proposed budget increase, including salaries, benefits, supplies, purchased professional services, and property services along with other miscellaneous expenses, which is a \$3,430,136 (4.39%) increase from last year's budget.

Mrs. Pesce asked how many different languages are spoken in the school, Superintendent Lubomski said there are currently 36 different languages spoken in the school district. Mrs. Pesce also asked how much longer the district will be considered an Alliance District, Superintendent Lubomski explained that TPS should be receiving funds for the next few years, and schools that are no longer a part of the Alliance District are still receiving some funds from the State due to their locations. Mayor Carbone further explained that the Alliance funds are ECS Funding and delivered in a Grant. The City will be getting an additional \$1,259,000 in Alliance funds for FY 2024, bringing the total to \$6,261,583. Superintendent Lubomski said that \$200,000 of those funds are to go to minority teacher recruitment, all the funds are monitored by the State and must be spent accordingly. Mr. Beyus asked the Board of Education to see what a 2% budget increase would look like, Ms. Cappabianca said it would be eliminating all the positions that are being asked for, along with more ELL support which isn't even in the budget, and eliminating some of the current staff. Mr. Beyus also asked to see the year-end Budget Performance Reports for the past two years for the Board of Education. Mr. Bushka wanted to know with being 10 months into the FY with a \$78 million budget, what the actual through June would be, Superintendent Lubomski said she believes that they will have a surplus because of more in-house programs. Mayor Carbone asked if any of the expenditures that are presented in this budget that relates to the staff could be moved into the Alliance District funds, Superintendent Lubomski said that you cannot put any classroom teacher's salaries into the Alliance District. Mayor Carbone asked for a report on the Alliance District Funds to see how the funds are spent. Mayor Carbone also let the Board of Education know that where the budget stands now, with not much revenue, the budget alone represents a 2 Mill Rate increase for the City. Mr. Eucalitto shared his thoughts on adding Physical Education teachers and how critical it is for students, reducing depression and anxiety, obesity, and leaving the child more focused when returning to the classroom. Mrs. Pesce asked if any of the money set aside for Minority teacher recruitment can also be spent on development; Ms. Cappabianca let her know that it is for both. Mr. Putnam shared with the Board of Finance that a lot of time IT gets overlooked, with security increases for the one-to-one computers. Mr. Bushka had some questions regarding the Revenue, he wanted to know if the Cares Act – ESSER 3 - \$5.9 million, was used for any expenses in the regular budget, Superintendent Lubomski said that this was to respond to Covid needs, and used over some time for one-time expenses, like hand sanitizer, and the windows at the Middle

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School for proper ventilation. Mr. Bushka wanted clarification that once TPS is no longer an Alliance District that \$5 million will be added to the ECS Fund and they will not be losing \$5 million in revenue, Mayor Carbone let him know that this was correct.

Mayor Carbone wanted to remind the Boards that the Capital Budget as presented would be an additional 2 Mill Rate increase to the taxpayers, so the total Board of Education budget as is would be a 4 Mill Rate increase, and this is not including the City budget. She did say that a lot of the requests in the Capital Budget were from the Facilities Assessment Report that were listed as priorities. Ms. Cappabianca told the Board that there is \$150,000 in the budget for air quality testing, which she forgot to mention before and it is in the Operating Budget. Mayor Carbone took this moment to remind the Board of Education that Capital expenditures should be made from the Capital Fund and not the Operating Budget. TPS Facilities Director John Barlow explained the new State Statute requiring air testing for Schools, this has been implemented since Covid. He went on to say that the State had put \$155 million in an HVAC Grant Fund, and when they announced it, you would have to have a shovel-ready project, they and only two months to get a plan in place. He does believe that the State will be reopening the HVAC Grant Fund for more applications. Mr. Barlow explained the Capital Plan is based on the Facilities Study that was done, and stretched out over five years. He said that the number one priority is anything that could close a school building, the second would be the health and safety of the schools and children, and last would be any needs of the buildings that do not fit the first two criteria. Mr. Beyus asked what the ADA Compliance issues are at Forbes, Mr. Barlow explained there were ADA Compliance issues in all the buildings, it could be as simple as a handlebar needing to be put in, or widening a doorway, at this time TPS needs to have a plan in place for all the buildings. Mr. Bushka asked about FY 24/25 regarding replacing the Middle School roof, Mr. Barlow explained that they will be covering the existing roof with a new one since there are many issues with the existing roof. Mr. Barlow explained further that in the Facilities Study, there were items that were pointed out that were coming to the end of their useable life, so with that study, they incorporated it into the 5-year plan. Mr. Eucalitto said that if the City waits until things fail to fix, it will cost 2-3 times more, saying putting an ongoing maintenance and repair plan in place will help maintain buildings. Mayor Carbone explained to the Boards that if there is a surplus in the Operating Budget, they can come to the Board of Finance and ask to transfer up to 2% of that surplus into the Capital Reserve.

Superintendent Lubomski spoke about the Technology Budge which includes Chromebook replacement with new licensing, and replacing the old smart boards that are in the classrooms. She wants to ensure that there is a cycle of replacing computers, and smartboards, along with upgrading the bandwidth to allow for all the extra computers trying to access the network. Mr. Bushka asked if there were any grant reimbursements for the technology upgrades, and Superintendent Lubomski said at this time there were not. Ms. Cappabianca added that TPS saved millions during Covid purchasing the equipment needed and that she wants to ensure that they keep on top of the upgrades to never be in a situation where they don't have the necessary tools. Mr. Putnam mentioned that with Chromebooks you only have a certain lifetime and they only provide security updates for a certain amount of time, when that time is up, they are no longer able to be used in the classrooms.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Beyus, seconded by Mr. Wright, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Heather Abraham, Asst. City Clerk

ATTEST:


CAROL L. ANDERSON, CITY CLERK