

A **SPECIAL JOINT MEETING** of the Board of Finance and the Board of Education was held in the City Hall Auditorium on Monday, April 30, 2018.

Present were Mayor Elinor Carbone and Board of Finance Members Lance Boynton, Laurene Pesce, Mark Bushka, Jenna Reichen, Christopher Anderson and Joshua Ferreira. Also present were Board of Education members Jessica Richardson, Ellen Hoehne, Fiona Cappabianca, John Kissko, Edward Corey, Peter Vergaro, Molly Spino, and Joanne Brogis, as well as Superintendent of Schools Denise Clemons and Board of Education Business Manager Rose Forzano.

Mayor Carbone called the meeting to order at 6:12 p.m. starting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

FY18/19 TORRINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROPOSED BUDGET

Supt. Clemons presented the proposed budget for the Torrington Public Schools for the fiscal period of July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019.

Supt. Clemons stated that among TPS's goals for the 2018/2019 fiscal year are to ensure sufficient support to existing staff and programs, support and implement standard space educational efforts, provide a safe and secure environment for students, and to provide all stakeholders with transparent communication. She stated that the overall enrollment in Torrington Public Schools decreased by almost 100 students from 2016/2017 to 2017/2018 while the number of English language learners and students in need of special education services increased.

Supt. Clemons stated that factors affecting the budget include student enrollment, free and reduced lunch, the rising number of English language learners and students in need of special education services, contractual obligations, increasing utility prices, expenditures for restructuring the district, middle school sports, and an alternative education program. She stated that salaries and benefits comprise 73.28% of the TPS budget and stated that cuts have resulted in the elimination of some staff and teachers, resulting in an increase to the average class size.

Supt. Clemons described some of the efforts being taken to support the TPS budget, including collaboration between Litchfield and Torrington High Schools, and requested the Board of Finance to approve the Board of Education's recommended budget.

Mr. Ferreira requested clarification regarding the specific increases to operating and capital expenses.

Supt. Clemons presented the proposed TPS budget increases for fiscal year 2018/2019, beginning with salaries which she said were due in large part to special education. Ms. Forzano discussed the increase in employee benefits.

Mr. Ferreira requested data showing the number of teachers and students and utility expenses over the past ten years. Supt. Clemons said she would send the requested reports to the Board.

Mr. Ferreira requested clarification regarding free and reduced lunch as one of the major drivers for increasing the TPS budget. Supt. Clemons explained that "free and reduced" lunch is used as a categorization of a population of students which generally implies eligibility for additional services.

Mr. Boynton questioned the proposed increase in non-certified salaries as it pertains to special education personnel. Supt. Clemons explained that some students require more than one paraprofessional. She added that TPS has been working to better train regular education teachers to support students with special needs so that a paraprofessional is not always needed.

Ms. Cappabianca stated the BOE is considering capping the number of students Torrington sends to Vocational and Agricultural (Vo-Ag) and Magnet schools as a means to save money.

Mr. Ferreira questioned the salaries in the proposed budget for Torrington's East Street School. Supt. Clemons and Ms. Cappabianca identified the budgeted amounts for East Street School and explained that the salaries for the school will remain on the budget until it is certain where staff will be transferred to.

Ms. Cappabianca and Supt. Clemons discussed the benefits that the new alternative education program for academically challenged students will have on the district and Mr. Ferreira questioned the work that still needs to be done to make the program a success.

Ms. Reichen requested clarification regarding projected grant availability and awards. Supt. Clemons explained that many grants are no longer offered and stated that the future of some other grants is uncertain.

Ms. Reichen and Mr. Ferreira questioned funding through Alliance District grants. Supt. Clemons and Mayor Carbone explained how the grant funds are budgeted.

The proposed capital improvement expenses included in the budget were discussed and Ms. Cappabianca clarified that there have been issues with windows falling out of the Middle School building.

Mrs. Pesce questioned the decrease in funding for professional development and Supt. Clemons explained that professional development expenses have been budgeted in the Title 2 funds.

Mr. Bushka questioned the increase in the transportation line item of the proposed budget. Ms. Cappabianca explained that the budget reflects a contractual increase and possible increase due to redistricting.

Mr. Anderson questioned what the BOE is proposing for a total increase to the TPS budget. Supt. Clemons stated that they are proposing a 3% increase to the operating budget and 2.4% increase to the capital budget.

Mr. Ferreira and Mrs. Pesce requested to see what a 0% increase budget would look like and Supt. Clemons stated that those figures would be forwarded to the Board.

Mr. Boynton suggested borrowing best practices from other districts and Ms. Cappabianca stated that Torrington has been working to develop regionalized services which might benefit TPS and the region.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Mr. Bushka, the meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jonathan R. Draper, Asst. Clerk

ATTEST:



CAROL L. ANDERSON, MMC
CITY CLERK