

Board of Education

Ellington, Connecticut

January 10, 2015

A regular meeting of the Ellington Board of Education was held on Saturday, January 10, 2015 in the School Administration Building.

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by the Chairperson, Dan Keune.

Present were: Messrs. Keune, McNamar, Roberson, Purcaro, and Young; Mesdames Hayes, Kiff-Judson and Picard-Wambolt; Mr. Stephen Cullinan, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Erin McGurk, Director of Educational Services; Dr. Kristy LaPorte, Director of Special Services; Mrs. Margaret Devlin, Director of Business Services; Mr. Robert Butler, Director of Facilities; Mr. Michael Varney, BOF liaison; Mr. Douglas Harding, BOF; and Mr. Leo Miller, BOS liaison. Mr. Blanchette, Mr. Friedman, and Student Representative Jennifer Roy were absent.

Also attending were: Mrs. Trudie Luck-Roberts, Principal, Center School; Mr. Michael Larkin, Principal, Crystal Lake School; Mr. David Welch, Principal, Windermere School; Ms. Jennifer Bordieri, Assistant Principal Windermere School; Mr. David Pearson, Principal, Ellington Middle School; Mr. Neil Rinaldi, Principal, Ellington High School; Mrs. Melissa Haberern, Special Education Supervisor; Mr. John Collins, IT Coordinator; Mr. Tim McCluskey, Athletic Director; and Ms. Laura Norbut, Administrative Intern.

Chairperson Keune welcomed all of the attendees and thanked them for their interest and support of our students. Mr. Cullinan thanked all of the administrators for their hard work and cooperation in the budget development process. He thanked the members of the business office for all of their efforts in preparing documentation.

Mr. Cullinan distributed a PowerPoint presentation used to review the Superintendent's proposed 2015-2016 budget and reviewed the documents that were included in the budget packet. These documents included:

- Agenda for January 10, 2015 Budget Workshop
- Board of Education Budget Guidelines
- Question & Answer Document
- Enrollment/Class Size Data
- Staffing Requests
- Requests not Included in Proposed Budget
- Net Per Pupil Expenditures for 2013-2014

Mr. Cullinan reviewed the schedule for the budget workshop. He described the budget development process that began in September and thanked all who contributed to the

preparation of these documents. He noted that the initial requests by administrators reflect their understanding of the economic climate as well as the needs of their students, the demands of quality educational programming, reductions in many accounts during previous budget cycles, and the unique needs of a number of our students.

As a result of the budget review process, the Superintendent’s Proposed Budget for 2015-2016 is \$35,592,942, which is a proposed increase of 4.45% over the current year. The proposed health insurance increase represents 2.05% of the total, with the remaining budget representing an increase of 2.4%.

There are ten accounts that impact the budget by 4.38%. Two of these accounts (Salaries and Health/Life Insurance) account for 3.51% of the proposed increase.

Health/Life Insurance	\$ 699,043	2.05%
Total Salaries (Including New Requests)	\$ 497,631	1.46%
Public Utilities	\$ 103,900	0.30%
Outside Tuition	\$ 42,469	0.12%
Program Improvement	\$ 35,753	0.10%
Social Security	\$ 31,897	0.09%
Workers’ Comp/Property Insurance	\$ 30,579	0.09%
Special Education Supplies	\$ 19,388	0.06%
Regular Transportation	\$ 18,221	0.05%
Program Supplies	<u>\$ 14,197</u>	<u>0.04%</u>
	\$1,493,078	4.38%
Remainder of Proposed Increase	<u>\$ 24,066</u>	<u>0.07%</u>
Total Budget Change	\$1,517,144	4.45%

Health/Life Insurance - The increase in the Health/Life Insurance account is \$699,043, which represents a 13.58% increase to the account, which impacts the entire budget by 2.05%. In December, representatives of Brown & Brown Insurance provided an overview to the Board detailing the impact of thirty high claims upon the Board’s account. At this point in time, our carrier (CIGNA) has issued a “not to exceed” estimate of 38%. Our broker has estimated a 32% increase in premiums. The account has been sent to bid as a stand-alone and in conjunction with another Board of Education. The administration has had additional conversations with our broker and will update the Board on any progress in reducing the increase to this account. The account has been budgeted at a 25% increase in premium, which has resulted in a 13.58% increase in the account. The difference is the result of higher premium shares paid by employees and changes in benefit plans achieved through contract negotiations.

Total Salaries - There are two collective bargaining groups that do not have negotiated contracts for 2015-2016 at this time. In addition, there are several non-represented

employees whose contracts need to be updated. Placeholders for these contracts and positions are included. The total increase in the salary account of \$497,631 represents an increase of 2.32% on the account. The proposed salary account increases the entire budget by 1.46%. This total contains \$67,191 in new staff requests. The requested positions with corresponding costs are listed in the blue staffing sheets in the budget book. To date, the Board has received eight letters of retirement, which are all accounted for in the proposed budget.

Public Utilities - In the past two years, the Public Utilities account had a reduction of approximately \$85,000. This year, the account is proposed with an increase of \$103,900. The electricity account contains an increase of \$86,000 while the natural gas/propane account has a proposed increase of \$22,600.

Outside Tuition - The Outside Tuition account is budgeted at an increase of \$42,469. Last year, this account was budgeted at a decrease of \$56,249. This was primarily the result of a significant decrease of \$82,409 in special education out-placed tuition. This year, based upon the needs of our students, we need to increase the special education tuition account by \$58,094. There are several accounts which impact this line item. The cost for the regional adult education program has a modest increase of 2%. Our costs for the Vocational Agricultural tuition will decrease due to an anticipated decrease in enrollment. Mr. Cullinan initially proposed an increase of \$50,000 for magnet school tuition to continue to build the fund to meet this growing obligation. However, due to the scope of the increase in the health insurance account, the magnet school tuition account has been proposed as flat-funded.

Program Improvement - The Program Improvement account is budgeted at an increased of \$35,753, which impacts the entire budget by 0.10%. An increase of \$12,400 is to provide funds for professional development that were previously supplied by a grant. The result of changes to the technology budget equals \$11,950. The lightspeed content filter accounts for an increase of \$6,000 while Naviance results in an increase of \$5,130. Mr. Cullinan stated that his intention was to increase funding for the academic enhancement program by \$34,076, but the increase in health insurance costs makes this difficult to do.

Social Security - Social Security contains an increase of \$31,897, which is an account increase of 6.1% and a budget impact of .09%. This budget request is based upon our current employee census.

Workers' Comp/Property Insurance – Workers' Compensation and property insurance has increased by \$30,579, an account increase of 10.47% and a budget impact of .09%. This account funds insurance for liability, auto, property, workers compensation, athletic and risk management.

Special Education Program Supplies - Special Education program supplies contain an increase of \$19,388. This impacts the budget by .06%, and \$16,824 of the increase is to provide materials to support students with Specific Reading Disabilities/Dyslexia.

Regular Transportation - The Regular Transportation account contains an increase of \$18,221, which is an increase of 1.18% on the account and an impact of 0.05% on the entire budget. The contracted increase with our vendor is 2.9%. A reduction in fuel costs is also calculated into this account.

Program Supplies - Program Supplies is budgeted at an increase of \$14,497, which is an account increase of 5.02% and an overall budget increase of 0.04%. The increase is spread across a number of accounts, such as Windermere Elementary music, Windermere Intermediate math, Ellington Middle School language arts and reading supplies, Ellington High School guidance, pupil services and district curriculum.

Mr. Cullinan stated that the budget book also contains a list of requests that were presented by program managers that were not included in this proposed budget. Those items represent an additional \$1,210,333. Had these requests been included, the proposed budget would represent an increase of 8%. Requests in the amount of \$90,888 will be purchased in the current year. Other requests in the amount of \$853,870 have not been included in the proposed budget at this time. The cost for two new staff positions (\$146,498) will be offset by staff reductions in other areas. Also, some special education staffing costs (\$119,077) will be offset by the use of Hartford Choice funds. In addition, there were also requests made to program managers that were not submitted to Mr. Cullinan.

Mr. Larkin, Mrs. Luck-Roberts, and Mr. Welch presented their individual school budgets. Mr. Larkin stated that overall the Crystal Lake budget is unchanged from last year with a 1% increase (\$371). This increase is with science and library/media accounts. In science, he has requested additional non-fiction texts, and in library/media, he has requested to purchase books that will support fifth and sixth grade readers. Mrs. Luck Roberts stated that the overall requested budget for Center School shows a minor decrease of -1% (-\$486). The most significant changes are with a decrease for math texts, a decrease for science and social studies texts, and an increase for library collection materials. Mr. Welch stated that the requested budget for Windermere Elementary shows an increase of 3% (\$1,839). The accounts to be increased are the music program, physical education/health, social studies and new equipment. For Windermere Intermediate, there is an increase of 4% (\$2,674). The accounts to be increased are the math program, music program supplies, physical education/health, and equipment replacement. Mr. Larkin and Mrs. Luck-Roberts also reviewed their staff requests.

Middle School Principal David Pearson reviewed his proposed budget, which has an

increase of 6% (\$8,184). He discussed the drivers/initiatives that have budget implications, namely the accounts of language arts, reading, math, and interscholastic sports. He also discussed requests for staffing and program materials/equipment to support student achievement.

High School Principal Neil Rinaldi reviewed his proposed budget, which has an increase of 6% (\$31,537). The driving forces behind this increase are an increase in the Purchased Services account; an increase in Program Supplies; an increase in Texts; and an increase in Library/Media and Repairs. He also discussed the proposed increased cost of musical instruments due to anticipated enrollment for the next year.

Mr. John Collins reviewed the Information Technology budget which is included in the system-wide budget. Mr. Collins detailed the various line items in the account and the functions that are supported. He noted an increase in the Purchased Services account due to the renewal of Naviance, and he discussed the three items in technology equipment requests.

Dr. Erin McGurk reviewed the Educational Services budget and the various functions such as curriculum development and professional development that it serves. She noted that the 15% increase (\$14,138) reflects a change in contracted rate for curriculum work and to partially offset Professional Development expenditures that were previously grant funded.

Dr. Kristy LaPorte provided a background of the current special needs student population and an overview of the various functions supported by the Special Services budget. She reviewed the special education disability subgroups represented in Ellington. Dr. LaPorte noted that the requested special services budget shows an increase of 9% (\$102,903). She then reviewed the major drivers impacting 2015-2016 budget requests: Increase in students needing 1 to 1 nursing support; Need for additional counseling services; Need for a Special Education teacher at Center School; Need for updated reading programs and teacher training for students with Learning Disabilities/Dyslexia.

Mr. Keune recessed the meeting at 11:45 a.m. for lunch. Mr. Keune called the meeting to order again at 12:15 p.m.

Mrs. Margaret Devlin and Mr. Rob Butler reviewed the system-wide crosswalk. They noted that the system-wide budget has an increase of 8.1% (\$871,657). Mrs. Devlin noted that some areas had been covered in previous presentations. Drivers of the increased budget include Copiers, Administrative Office, Health/Life Insurance, Social Security, Property Insurance, and Plant and Town-wide Maintenance. Other accounts that showed decreases were: Instruction/Tuitions, Board of Education services, and Special Education Transportation. Mr. Butler reviewed the areas covered by the Plant

and Maintenance account and reviewed various needs in each area.

Mr. Keune invited Mr. Leo Miler, Board of Selectman liaison, to comment on this year's budget. Mr. Miller stated that once again he was impressed with the presentations by administrators and Mr. Cullinan's grasp of all the issues.

Mr. Keune invited Mr. Michael Varney, Board of Finance liaison, to comment upon the budget process. Mr. Varney commented upon: healthcare; future energy issues; technology enhancements; network connections between schools; system-wide projects; and the Crystal Lake School project.

Mr. Keune invited Mr. Doug Harding, Board of Finance liaison, to comment upon the budget process. Mr. Harding stated that he was also impressed with the presentations and curious to see the outcome of the budget process.

Mr. Keune invited the members of the Board to discuss any aspects of the budget. He noted that this is currently the Superintendent's Proposed Budget. As the health insurance bid data is not due until February 4, 2015, the Board agreed to hold a special meeting between February 4, 2015 and February 12, 2015 to approve the Board of Education's proposed budget.

A motion was made to adjourn at 12:57 p.m.

1st. M. Purcaro

2nd. M. Young

VOTE: Unanimous. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Marie Hayes
Secretary

AMH/amd