



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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BOARD OF FINANCE

JOHN P. RACHEK
Chairman

DOUGLAS B. HARDING
MARK A. JOYSE
DAVID J. OLENDER
BARRY C. PINTO
MICHAEL D. VARNEY

BUDGET HEARINGS MARCH 21, 2017 MINUTES

Members Present: J. Rachek-Chairman, D. Harding, M. Joyse, D. Olender, B. Pinto, M. Varney

Others Present: N. DiCorleto-Finance Officer, S. Nicol-Superintendent of Schools, B. Greenleaf-Dir Finance & Operations BOE, D. Keune-Chmn BOE, Members of the Board of Education, School Administration, L. Spielman-First Selectman, Members of the Board of Selectmen, several residents.

Call to Order

Chairman John Rachek called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

Board of Education Budget 2017-18

Scott Nicol, Superintendent of Schools introduced the budget by saying that the Ellington School District is a medium sized district with approximately 2,700 students. The goal is to balance the budget climate with the needs of the students, especially with the State budget looming. The Ellington School District is continually changing. Ellington has a much diversified population in the classroom now. Ellington has 524 low income households in town that qualify under the Husky A Program. 21% of the school population consists of diverse cultures. Originally the budget as submitted to the Board of Education had a 3.18% increase but the Board of Education revised it to a 2.69% increase or \$972,220 over last year's budget. The major drivers are salaries and benefits 64%, outside tuition and technology. \$300,000 has been saved from eliminated positions and reallocated to other budget items. Two aspects of the budget are Maintenance of Effort to maintain programs, and Keeping Pace to keep pace with the needs of students for programming while working under budget constraints.

Maintenance of effort this year is up including transportation. The K-6 transition will be complete next year with a new .4 art teacher, additional .1 media assistant, and office staff. The High School is the flagship of the school district we well as the Town. Keeping pace for the high

school includes 1:1 chrome books for grades 3-12, a new assistance principal ½ time for the Middle School and High School, a new theater position due to demand and competition with magnet schools, a math instruction specialist and a special education teacher.

Mr. Nicol discussed the unfunded mandates. One of them is the Transition Program for 18-21 years old that the district is still servicing for transition to work or college and is being currently run at the High School. The State is mandating that the program not be on school grounds, so they are working to find a location offsite to run this program. Another is the Expulsion Program; the State is increasing the mandated tutoring for expelled students from 2 hrs/day to 5 hrs/day but not giving the school districts any funding for it. The net to the budget for these two programs will be \$17,000. The Board is looking for a site to house both programs. A certified teacher is required for these programs. There was discussion by the residents in the audience that they felt the State should not impose these items on the schools and that school officials should stand up to the State. Mr. Nicol sympathized and agreed. He and Mr. Keune stressed to them that they are working with state and local representatives to let them know they are against legislation that does not make sense. However these programs have been forced upon the towns and Mr. Nicol stated that they are trying to do the best they can with what they have. Refusing to comply with the State mandates is not an option. The State can take over the system or cut back their funding. The Superintendent offered to discuss the details with the residents after the meeting.

Notable accounts - the transportation line is projected to increase 5.52% and this is in working with the surrounding towns to get the best pricing for transportation. The Property/WC Insurance will increase 5.93%, and the Electricity budget is a reduction of 6.09%. Solar generates 20% of the load. They have locked into a 20 year contract for consistent pricing through the solar and locked into three year contract for pricing of the unknown portion. Health Insurance increased 1.75% because claims have been good. Brian Greenleaf has looked at all the accounts and those that have been consistently underfunded, he has leveled them out. Overall, the salary and benefits in this budget increase of 2.14% is made up of 2.58% in salaries and reduction in benefits.

Outside tuition increased by 13.08% and roughly 120 students will go to outside schools. The tuition per student is roughly \$4,000-6,000 based on State approval. This budget is difficult because the number of students utilizing other schools is an unknown until the school year begins. The main concerns for this year are special education, outside tuition and technology. The staffing for the technology is a concern because it encroaches on the technology equipment budget.

Mr. Greenleaf spoke regarding the effects of the Governor's proposed budget. The three items in particular are the ECS formula, the special education funding and the teacher's pensions. For special education, the town will apply for reimbursement based on prior year's costs. The special education grant in the amount of 0-54% is based on the grand list for the town and he stated that they are anticipating roughly 34%. Ellington is anticipating \$2.4 million. The accounting for this will change and he explained the various methods. This 2.4 million has been taken out of the ECS grant funds. The net effect is a reduction to Ellington of about \$600,000. Ellington has fared better than our surrounding towns due to population increases and percentage of Husky A families. If the teachers' pension bill is passed, Ellington would be paying 1.9\$. Mr. Greenleaf was not overly concerned due to conversations with local and state politicians who have indicated they are not in favor of this and say this may not be the year for this change. The net amount after the ECS and Special Education grants is a BOE Budget of \$28,028,277.

Questions:

Mr. Varney agreed that the Board of Education this year has held the line on spending but that the revenues will be an issue this year. The net increase of \$972,000 plus the \$600,000 in revenue reduction will be equal to 1 mill. Mr. Rachek reinforced the need to put pressure on our legislature for funding for the mandates.

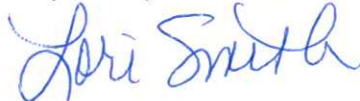
Mr. Mullin stated that he felt grants cause the town to spend more money after we start a program and the grant is over. He would like to see a zero increase budget. Supt. Nicol stated that the town looks carefully at every grant it applies for to make sure that is not the case.

Mr. Rachek stated that the State is \$1.7 billion in the red and that they need revenue. The only way they can get it is from taxes and from the towns. Mr. Keune stated that the Board of Education reduced items from the Superintendent's budget this year and that they were very focused on striking a balance between the needs of the school system and funding.

Adjournment

MOVED (JOYSE) SECONDED (VARNEY) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted:



Lori Smith, Recording Secretary