

Regional School District No. 7
Board of Education
Special Budget Meeting
March 5, 2008

PRESENT: Mrs. Yard, Mrs. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Thomson, Mrs. Kenneson, Mrs. Dorazio, Mr. Griffey, Roger Newbury, Director of Finance and Operations, and Clint Montgomery, Superintendent of Schools.

Mr. Thomson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Thomson opened the budget discussion by reporting that the overall budget increase from last year was at about 4.2%. There is a 4.75% increase shown in the teacher's salaries as a result of the recent negotiations. The teachers' contract includes a provision to stay until 3:00 p.m. for a certain number of days for professional development.

Mr. James Millar, Chair of the Board of Finance in Colebrook, commented that the overall budget is up 4.2% from last year, and last year it was up 3.3%. He asked if there was a reason for the budget to increase more this year.

Superintendent Montgomery responded that, like everyone, the District has been hit hard with fuel costs and have had to budget an extra \$100,000. The District has hired only one new teacher to continue a Chinese teacher's position that was previously funded as a host/guest teacher through the State Department of Education.

Mr. Millar inquired about how many students are participating in the program. Superintendent Montgomery responded that approximately 20 students at the high school and approximately 60 at the middle school level.

Mr. Newbury reported that the capital plan is included in the budget. This plan included redoing lockers, buying a truck, boiler, air handler and security system, and the expense is spread out over four years.

Mr. Ronald Aubel, Selectman from the Town of Colebrook, asked the board to clarify the line item titled "unprogrammed." Mr. Newbury responded that this money is held back from certain departments to cover unexpected expenses and then this unprogrammed money is released at a later date.

Mr. Millar wondered what happens if there are no "unexpected expenses." Mr. Newbury responded that in the event that there are no unexpected expenses, the money goes back into the departments.

Mr. Aubel questioned the increase in the extracurricular line items. Mr. Newbury explained that they reflect the negotiated salary increase, and that the only other changes are a new middle school volleyball coach and middle school assistant track coach.

Mr. Aubel requested that the board keep in mind, when creating the budget, that some of these increases are quite steep. Mr. Jerram responded that the increase in oil prices is out of their control as well as the jump in special education expenses. Superintendent Montgomery clarified that there are incoming seventh grade special needs students with costs that were previously the responsibility of the K-6 districts. There are also students in new group homes that the school is responsible for paying for their education.

Mr. Leon Carper, member of the Board of Finance from Colebrook, inquired about the new law regarding suspensions. Superintendent Montgomery confirmed that there is a new law starting July 1 that requires schools to provide in school suspension programs rather than out of school. They are in the process of setting up a juvenile review board as an alternative route for troubled youth.

Mr. Millar asked if there were any new programs or initiatives. Superintendent Montgomery replied that the Chinese program is the only new program that has an expense associated with it, but there is no actual net increase in staff.

Mr. Miller noted that about half the increase is in salaries. He asked if non-certified staff also get an increase and is this included? Mr. Newbury responded that all of these positions have their own unions and contracts, and that they do all reflect some type of increase over a period of time. For example, the custodians have a 3.9% over three years, Secretaries have 3.5% increase over three years, Administrators have a 3.74% increase over three years, and Paraprofessionals are currently in negotiations.

Mr. Donald Stein, First Selectman of Barkhamsted, questioned whether the applied surplus would go down or not, and he noted that assessments are down and tuition revenue is up. Mr. Newbury responded that money designated for debt service is now fixed and predictable. He noted that there will be some significant increases in health care costs from last year and that the policy year changed, so they will have a definite quote as to how much to budget. Supt. Montgomery added that there are currently have 70 students who pay tuition. They also receive money from the state for VoAg students.

Mr. Aubel questioned whether it would be economical to sub contract building and grounds maintenance. Mr. Thomson responded that the reliability and quality of the people they have couldn't compare to sub contractors. Mr. Newbury added that it might end up costing more due to the fact that you'd have to hire security almost around the clock and if there were an emergency on a weekend or holiday, you'd be paying a lot more.

Mr. Stein noted that if it is possible to not have a referendum, he would be in full agreement.

Mr. Aubel congratulated the board on getting the teachers on board with the HSA.

Mr. Thomson noted that they have extended an early retirement package to those eligible as a side agreement to the teachers' contract.

MOTION by Mr. Jerram, seconded by Mrs. Sexton Read, and passed unanimously to reschedule the regular board meeting from 3/12/08 to 3/19/08.

CHANGE BOARD
MEETING

MOTION by Mrs. Kenneson, seconded by Mr. Griffey, and passed unanimously, to go into Executive Session at 7:50 p.m. for the purpose of negotiations. Present in Executive Session: Mr. Thomson, Mrs. Yard, Mrs. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Griffey, Mrs. Kenneson, Mrs. Dorazio, Roger Newbury, Director of Finance and Operations, and Clint Montgomery, Superintendent of Schools.

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MOTION by Mrs. Kenneson, seconded by Mr. Griffey, and passed unanimously, to come out of Executive Session at 9:14 p.m.

PUBLIC

MOTION by Mr. Jerram, seconded by Mr. Griffey, and passed unanimously, to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

ADJOURN

Respectfully submitted,

Tera B. Dunn