

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Stamford, Connecticut

February 12, 2009

The Special Meeting of the Board of Education was held on February 12, 2009 at the Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Ms. Nabel, President with the following Board members present: Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade. Absent: Mayor Malloy. Also in attendance: Dr. Starr, Dr. Hamilton, Mr. Dunn, Dr. Nicholson, Ms. Karwan, Mr. Murphy, representatives from News 12, Stamford Times, Stamford Advocate, and approximately 45 guests.

Salute to the flag.

Ms. Nabel indicated that the only topic on the agenda is the Board of Education's vote on the Superintendent's recommended Operating and Grant budgets for 2009-2010. She thanked the members of the public who were in attendance and noted that the vote has been preceded by approximately five Fiscal Committee meetings varying in length from one hour to three hours during which every program in the school budget has been discussed, examined and reexamined. She thanked Dr. Starr, Mr. Dunn, and Mr. Murphy for their very hard work in preparing the budget and answering Board questions regarding the budget as well as questions from other Boards. She thanked Ms. Heftman for her guidance and shepherding of the Board through this process as well as members of her Committee, Mr. Mathews, Mr. King, and Mr. Rubino.

Resolution 02-12-09:81

Ms. Heftman moved, seconded by Mr. Polo:

BE IT RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education accept the 2009-2010 Operating Budget as outlined in the budget documents in the amount of \$228,606,204 (4.57%) and 1958.4 positions.

Ms. Heftman noted that the Committee did not specifically vote on this resolution the other night, but there were no objections raised to any of the items on the Superintendent's recommended list.

Ms. Heftman moved, seconded by Mr. Rubino to amend the resolution to reduce the amount to \$226,810,146 (3.75%) and 1948.4 positions.

Ms. Heftman noted that the items for reduction in the amendment are represented in the document that the Superintendent submitted on February 10, 2009, titled "Stamford Public Schools – 2009-2010 – Possible Revisions."

Dr. Starr stated that the reduction in positions in the Operating Budget is being shifted to the Grants Budget. We are not reducing 10 positions, we are shifting them.

Dr. Starr reviewed the reductions that occurred due to recent projections by the City and/or recent developments and are as follows:

1. \$1,452,660 cross charge from the City for shared services.
2. Locked in bus fuel that has enabled us to reduce \$50,000.
3. Locked in oil heat which has enabled us to reduce by \$100,000.
4. Recommending a restoration of Interscholastic Athletics to \$160,000.
5. Leaving the Assistant Superintendent position vacant which is a savings of \$173,000.
6. Foregoing bonuses for Dr. Starr and his team this year for \$21,000+.
7. The possible increase in IDEA funding is enabling us to shift 10 educational assistants to that grant - \$300,000.
8. Fine tuning of redistricting projections reduces one bus by \$80,000.
9. Adding back in a media assistant for \$30,000 that mistakenly we had not picked up.
10. Due to ongoing conversations with the City about other post employment benefits we are restoring \$416,000 additional into that account.
11. Increasing our use of erate funds to offset City IT expenditures by \$100,000.
12. We have refined numbers from our medical benefits consultants that enable us to bring down that cost by \$125,000.

This brings us down to a 3.75% increase rather than a 4.57% increase.

The amendment was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade

Mr. Rubino moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti to reduce \$25,000 from Program 33/39 which specifically would reduce the amount allocated for the Assistant Transportation Director and return it to an Office Support Specialist position.

Mr. Rubino explained that there is \$64,000 allocated to the Assistant Transportation Director. If you reduce that by \$25,000 it would get you down for what you would pay for an Office Support Specialist.

Ms. Heftman asked what position titles are there between OSS and Assistant Director.

Dr. Starr explained that there is a range of OSS positions, but they are Executive Secretary, clerical support, office support specialists. He can provide all the range of titles that exist within unit. Ms. Heftman asked if there are positions that have people who would be reporting to that position or are they positions that report to? She is leery about doing is by taking this out we are precluding any conversation about what the position might need to be. This position, if we drop it to OSS, does that mean that that position could then supervise other people or is that a non-supervisory position? Dr. Starr responded that it is non-supervisory and we believe it should be a position that is at a higher level. We will bring forward the position description to the Labor Relations Committee at the appropriate time to move it through. This is a budget issue about what the proper amount should be allocated in order to be able to attract someone to that position that will have the right background and skill set to do the job that we want done. Dr. Starr stated that to be accurate, the Assistant Transportation Director positions show us in 39 and the reallocation comes from program 33. So we are combining half of a position in 39 and half in 33 and putting one in 39.

Mr. Rubino noted that he understands Ms. Heftman's point, except that the Board is voting on the budget tonight.

Mr. King asked how the salary number was calculated. Are there some job skills you are expecting that person to bring to the table? Mr. Dunn explained the logic in asking for a position that was senior to an OSS position. We are trying to go out to some of the other school districts and find a boiler plate description that we could use. This person should be able to provide back up in running our VersaTrans routing software. That is a skill set that is probably beyond what we would expect in an OSS position. Another improvement we have tried to make over time in the Transportation Office to create regular entering of all of our invoicing from First Student and forecasting transportation costs especially when we go and look at some of our after school programs to pick up trends. There again that is something which we learned on the Special Education side is that we need to have more horsepower in those jobs than an OSS position. In addition to some of the work of answering the phone, put in a logging system where we log all conversations, but also to provide the VersaTrans backup and to start increasing our analytical capability in that department.

Mr. Mathews noted that everyone can be replaced. An important element of this job is communication with the parents and children in the City of Stamford who take buses. If you structure this area as described by Mr. Rubino you can have an effective office and still save money. He supports Mr. Rubino.

Mr. Polo asked if Dr. Starr could further elaborate on the “first on the list” comment. Dr. Starr responded that when we create OSS positions within the UAW there is a contract that goes through the City, not a bargaining unit that we deal with, and there are certain Civil Service requirements and there is a test. The Assistant Transportation Director position – the skills that are required as Mr. Dunn described, as well as some of the other skills that are required we would have to go and look to see if any of the current job descriptions within that bargaining unit would be appropriately aligned to the skills that are necessary to provide the level of service we want and then there is a test that occurs and you need to go through the list of people who pass the test.

Ms. Lorenti asked if we had an OSS in that department who has left? Dr. Starr responded that was correct. Ms. Lorenti stated then that according to that bargaining unit it would be the next person in line and we all know customer service skills are very important. Ms. Lorenti indicated she would save her conversation for Labor Relations.

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak asked that there used to be an OSS in a similar position and then we have to call in other people over the summer to help with the routing. Mr. Dunn responded that the OSS position is not a technical position and we are looking to provide technical expertise both in accounting and routing software. Dr. Starr noted that there are other clerical type support things that are done in concert with the Research Office in terms of sending letters out. We need to bring a job description forward and then discuss it further.

Mr. Mathews stated that relative to the skills set that deals with customer service shouldn't that be required of the Transportation Manager before we consider another position?

The amendment failed with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, and Mr. Rubino. Opposed: Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, and Ms. Wade.

Mr. Rubino moved, seconded by Mr. Mathews to reduce Program 39-Line 510 for Pupil Transportation in the amount of \$240,000 which is the cost of three buses.

Ms. Heftman responded that this was discussed at Fiscal and had thought that the way we had left it was that we were going to ask Dr. Starr and his staff to work up a scenario for us around a \$1/2M cut that we might look towards when we get to May and have to reallocate. We were not necessarily going to make a reduction now in a vacuum, but were going to ask our consultant to give us more information. At this time she did not support this amendment.

The amendment failed with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Mr. Mathews, and Mr. Rubino. Opposed: Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lorenti, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, and Ms. Wade.

Mr. Rubino moved, seconded by Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak to cut \$122,000 from Program 32 in order to combine the positions of Director of ESL and Director of Bilingual Education.

Mr. Rubino stated that this is a natural place where a combination can occur since there is a similar skills set required for those positions.

Ms. Nabel pointed out that those are the only two people who serve a very large second language speaking population. They are the only two people throughout the district who are in fact in charge of testing, diagnosing, recommending, and going from school to school to administer an English as a Second Language program which is substantially different from a Bilingual Program. She would not vote in favor of this amendment.

Ms. Heftman stated that she would not support this amendment because it is an issue that was not raised in any of the Fiscal Committee meetings that we had.

Mr. Polo asked which grants support these positions. Dr. Starr responded it would be Title VII and Title III.

The amendment failed with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. Rubino. Opposed: Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lorenti, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, and Ms. Wade. Abstained: Mr. Mathews.

Mr. Rubino moved, seconded by Mr. Mathews to cut \$90,000 to combine the positions of Curriculum Associate for Elementary Math and Curriculum Associate for Secondary Math.

Mr. Rubino stated that these are substantially similar positions. If you are going to have deficiencies anywhere it would be to combine positions like this.

Ms. Heftman noted that she would not be supporting this amendment for the same reasons she stated for the previous amendment.

The amendment failed with the following Board members voting in favor: Mr. Rubino and Mr. Mathews. Opposed: Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lorenti, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, and Ms. Wade.

The amended resolution was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

Resolution 02-12-09:82

Ms. Heftman moved, seconded by Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak:

BE IT RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of

Schools, that the Board of Education accept the 2009-2010 Grant Budget in the amount of \$20,531,082 and 154.6 positions as outlined in the 2009-2010 Superintendent's Budget request allowing the Superintendent to apply for, accept funding, and administer all the itemized grants on the attached list.

Ms. Heftman moved, seconded by Ms. Lorenti to amend the resolution to increase the amount to \$20,831,082 and 164.6 positions.

Ms. Heftman noted that the change is due to the hope of the IDEA funds that will be coming in the stimulus package which will enable us to move 10 positions out of the operating budget into the grant budget.

The amendment was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

The amended resolution was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

Ms. Heftman noted that the next resolution deals with out years, which is required by the City Charter. Also, this resolution was not voted on by the Committee.

Resolution 02-12-09:83

Ms. Heftman moved, seconded by Mr. King:

BE IT RESOLVED, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, that the Board of Education accept the 2010-2011 Operating Budget in the amount of \$239,897,442 (5.77%) and the 2011-2012 Operating Budget in the amount of \$252,130,554 (5.10%).

Ms. Nabel added that this resolution is on our agenda due to a provision in the City Charter that requires us to provide an estimate of budgeting in the out years for planning purposes only.

The resolution was passed with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, and Ms. Wade. Opposed: Mr. Rubino.

Mr. Mathews stated that as we head on through the budget process with the Board of Finance and Board of Representatives and finally to a reallocation to the budget, he wanted to bring to the attention of the Board the position of Director of Safety and Security. He did not move to delete that position from the budget, but he thinks as we move to reallocation there has to be clear definition of that position, what it entails, and how it helps to make the teaching/learning environment in our schools safe and secure. He will be looking at this position and depending on what we have to do when it comes time to reallocate that position will be spoken to by him.

Ms. Nabel thanked Mr. Mathews. She noted that she believes that question was raised and asked for follow up and this will be followed up most likely on the Labor Relations part of the agenda. Mr. Mathews stated he did not receive the information this evening that he requested. Ms. Nabel indicated that information would be available on Tuesday, February 24, 2009.

Dr. Starr thanked the Board for its hard work over the past several months. He also thanked staff, particularly Mr. Dunn and Mr. Murphy, along with everyone on his team including the principals who participated which were Ms. Wunder, Ms. Tourse, and Ms. Figluizzi. The amount of hours that were spent making sure that we had a budget that we could bring to you that was responsible against both the fiscal climate and continuing the educational work.

Ms. Nabel pointed out that this is only the first step in the process. The Board of Education has gone over this budget with a fine tooth comb, but now we move on to other City boards that will repeat the process in some respects. It is really incumbent on all of us, Board members, parents, community members, to close ranks behind what is really a minimum request to provide for the education of the children of this City and defend what we take to the other Boards.

Ms. Nabel reported that the next step would be for Dr. Starr to present the budget to the Board of Finance in a preliminary way on March 9, 2009 at 6:30 pm, there is a public hearing on March 16, 2009 at 6:30 pm which is a joint hearing by the Fiscal Committees of the Board of Finance and Board of Representatives, and a final meeting with the Board of Finance on March 26, 2009 at 6:30 pm.

Ms. Heftman moved, seconded by Mr. King, to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m. with the following Board members voting in favor: Ms. Heftman, Mr. King, Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Nabel, Mr. Polo, Mr. Rubino, and Ms. Wade.

Joshua P. Starr, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Executive Officer