

MINUTES OF FISCAL
COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Stamford, Connecticut
March 13, 2008

The Fiscal Committee Meeting of the Board of Education was held on March 13, 2008 at the Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard. The meeting was called to order at 6:41 p.m. by Ms. McManus, Chairperson, with the following Committee members present: Mr. Freedman, Mr. King, Ms. McManus, Ms. Nabel, and Mr. Rubino. Also in attendance: Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak, Ms. Lorenti, Mr. Mathews, Ms. Wade, Mr. Dunn, Mr. Murphy, Ms. Anderson, Ms. Holland, and Ms. Siladi.

Ms. McManus opened the meeting with a review of the Capital Budgeting Process. Mr. Freedman indicated that the Board does not receive much detail to substantiate the costs. Mr. Dunn stated that with the Facilities Audit we would be able to provide the Board up to date information on the Capital Plan before it goes to the Planning Board. Ms. Nabel inquired about how the priorities are set. Mr. Dunn responded that Mr. Barbarotta is working out the details for the Facilities Audit RFP. Once the Facilities Audit is complete there will be a better tracking system and information available prior to the Capital Request being submitted to the Planning Board. Mr. Dunn also thought the best approach would be to have a quarterly review of the Capital Budget with the Fiscal Committee. The Committee also requested a review of the RFP before it is sent out. Mr. Rubino suggested setting a dollar amount on Capital projects before they are started either at \$250,000 or \$500,000. The Committee decided it would like to review all Capital Projects- from planning stage, to RFP to completion for all projects valued at \$350,000 or more. As well, the committee would like a quarterly review with City Engineering to get an update of all ongoing projects.

There was a review of Contracts & Grants which started with a contract for the Health & Physical Education consultant position along with two grant funded contracts for grant writing and legal analysis and drafting for a NCLB Handbook. There was also discussion on the Yerwood Center contract for the implementation of the ALTA program for 40 youths at the Yerwood Center on Wednesday and Saturday. Ms. Siladi gave an update on the ALTA program and how we are tracking the success of the program. Ms. Siladi provided additional information with respect to what would be expected from the consultants. Ms. Siladi also indicated that 6 grants have been submitted thus far this year and that she would be notified by June as to whether or not the Stamford Public Schools

received any of the grants applied for. Ms. Siladi also noted that many of the funding sources (Federal) are now looking at the census numbers on the NCLB website instead of the free/reduced lunch numbers.

Ms. Lahiri-Hoherchak arrived at 7:30 p.m.

Ms. McManus asked for the 2007-2008 budget update and Mr. Murphy responded that the budget was tight and that he was waiting for the utility bills. He noted that we are close to the numbers and that he has frozen central office accounts. No school based budgets have been held, just central office. He noted that there is the additional cost for the seven Educational Assistants for Special Education. With respect to the substitute teacher account, Ms. Anderson indicated that the account for GE training of \$28,000 would be transferred and will cover one substitute a day for 311 days. Mr. Dunn noted that the salary accounts came in close and Mr. Murphy noted that the health insurance is a little bit better than predicted.

Under the 2008-2009 Budget, Mr. Freedman confirmed that the Board of Education approved a budget with a 5.94% increase, but the Mayor has included an additional \$27M in what he has defined as education-related spending in his budget. It is after including this additional \$27M that the Mayor's has computed a 7.4% increase in education-related spending in his budget. Mr. Dunn explained that this increase is primarily related to debt service. Ms. McManus asked for a copy of the cover page of the Mayor's Budget book along with any pages related to education. Mr. Dunn will provide this information in the Board package.

Ms. McManus reminded everyone of the upcoming Board of Finance and Board of Representative meetings which everyone should try and attend.

Mr. Holland gave a report on the Special Education forecast and indicated that out of district costs are on the rise. The February 29, 2008 target goal was to bring back 10 students into the district. He has achieved more than 50% of that goal (five are back in the district and of those five, one has moved away). He discussed the High Roads location in Wallingford whose certification had been in jeopardy. The State has moved High Roads back to a priority list. This could be a \$100,000 loss to our excess cost fund reimbursement; however, High Roads agreed to defray \$98,800 tuition costs. If this is the case the February payment would not be made. He indicated that as we move forward to bring the other five students back by the end of the month, he would need to verify with Mr. Murphy the latest projections and then report back to the Committee. He will also be meeting with Mr. Dunn and Mr. Murphy to evaluate recommendations for out-of-district placement for 2008-2009.

Ms. McManus asked how up to date we are with Medicaid reimbursements. Mr. Holland responded that currently we have \$240,000 in reimbursables and anticipate receiving \$170,000 by the end of April. He indicated that an e-mail went to staff on Monday requesting a target of 100%

completion on billings by April 11th. He will send a memo next week to staff that will indicate who is missing what with a copy to all principals. He also noted that he is meeting with a company that has a billing software which could reduce a step in the billing process. Mr. Dunn indicated that the SEA and Board of Education signed a Memorandum of Agreement providing staff an hour a month of compensated time to complete their billings. Ms. Anderson noted that this is an inherent function of their job and Mr. Holland suggested remodeling the job description to include this responsibility.

Ms. McManus asked for a list of specifications for the Internal Audits that are to start next year. Mr. Dunn noted that in Special Education a person has been hired to come in and start verifying the numbers and the \$4,000 needed will be from the interest of the GE Grant.

Ms. McManus reported that the \$150,000 in interest from the GE Grant could be used for whatever the Committee decided on. Mr. Dunn passed out a recommended budget for the use of the interest from the GE Grant, stating that some of the items were estimates at this point in time. There were no questions from the Committee regarding the budget.

Ms. Nabel moved, seconded by Mr. Freedman to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. with the following Committee members voting in favor: Mr. Freedman, Mr. King, Ms. McManus, Ms. Nabel, and Mr. Rubino.

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