



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR MICHAEL LENARES

March 14, 2011

Minutes – Newington Town Council **Special Meeting**

Mayor Lenares called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m. in the Helen Nelson Room of the Town Hall

I PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (waived – recited at Public Hearing)

II ROLL CALL (waived – roll call taken at Public Hearing)

Councilors Present:

Councilor Banach
Councilor Bottalico
Councilor Casasanta
Councilor Cohen
Councilor Klett
Councilor McBride
Councilor Nagel
Council Nasinnyk
Mayor Lenares

Staff Present

John Salomone, Town Manager
Dr. William Collins, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Jeffrey Schumann, Asst. Superintendent of Schools
Lou Jachimowicz, Business Manager, Board of Education
Jaime Trevethan, Exec. Asst. to the Town Manager

III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - NONE

IV. CONSIDERATION OF NEW BUSINESS

A. Budget Review – Board of Education

Present were Chairman Woods, Dr. Marc Finkelstein, Mr. Clark Castelle, Mr. Dan Carson, Dr. Collins, Dr. Schumann, Mr. Lou Jachimowicz and other members of the Board of Education.

Mr. Steve Woods, Chairman of the Board of Education showed a Power Point presentation of the Budget Review and gave a brief summary of each division. A copy of the presentation is attached to the minutes. He emphasized that this presentation is of the Board of Education's proposed budget, not the Town Manager's proposed Board budget because there is a difference of about \$540,000.

Councilor Bottalico asked regarding the 21 to 24 teachers will be laid off, some will be retirees? Mr. Woods said yes. Councilor Bottalico mentioned an increase in the 6th, 7th & 8th grade class sizes and how is that determined? Mr. Woods said its spread, and not ever got to the high school so the teachers added were in the elementary and the middle school levels which are the two levels that continue to grow. Councilor Bottalico asked if the \$738,000 grant is not replenished next year how many teachers we will lose. Mr. Woods said from our side none, the \$738,000 is carried in revenue so it has nothing to do with our budget. Councilor Bottalico said that if the Town does give the \$738,000 to the Board will there be layoffs. Mr. Woods said no there won't

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be. Mr. Woods said that that \$738,000 will be in the revenue account and not in the Board of Ed's budget. Mr. Salomone said that all the revenue gets accounted for as a revenue item and it will appear as a one time carry over and doesn't show up as salaries just as a revenue item next year. Councilor Casasanta asked if next fiscal year the taxpayers will have to fund the \$738,000. Mr. Woods said we can't say it's a fixed number. Councilor Casasanta asked why it was given to the Board of Education. Mr. Salomone said that it wasn't given to the Board of Education but went into the general revenue. Councilor Casasanta said she is looking at this through the taxpayers' viewpoint.

Councilor Banach said this money came from the federal stimulus package, at one time it was an attempt to get the economy going again and in this case for Newington it was stipulated to go for teachers salaries. He said that he looks at it as almost like winning a lottery. Regarding the special education \$325,000 he asked if anyone could comment on what's driving that, is this a surge or something that might be a common factor. Mr. Woods said that this will be a common problem. There are many mandates that require us to provide certain services for students, many of whom are out placed and we are actually out placing fewer students in Newington and we have to provide the programs and also transportation. This costs about \$25,000 per student and another is that the State is backing away from their reimbursement. Figuring it costing \$200,000 per student to out place, the State is backing away from 100%, they went down to 82% last year, and they're supposed to pick up the tab around 60% and not doing that. Councilor Banach asked if there was any consideration of regionalizing with other towns to maybe contain costs. Dr. Collins said yes, it depends on the individual and specific needs that students will have. Councilor Banach said regarding impacts with layoffs, are there any special programs that might have to be eliminated. Dr. Collins said that the gifted program is out of the high school and others may be reduced, and we have teams coming in October for accreditations. Councilor Nasinnyk said it was evident with public participation that there was concern with the number of teachers that will be, 12 or 13 teachers retiring, but the slides showed that 21 to 24 positions will be eliminated. Will the difference be 8 to 11 layoffs, so with the Town Manager's proposal of having \$540,000 cut will there also be increase in additional layoffs. Dr. Collins said yes, looking at the Town Manager's proposal, there will be additional layoffs. She asked with the Health & Benefits funds saving, you could replace some money into the budget, - there a potential of some money there? Mr. Woods said nothing is final until we meet again as a body. Councilor Nasinnyk said her primary concern is the number of teacher we'd lose. Mr. Woods said that he believes we will be in a better place next year, 2012 & 2013. Councilor Cohen asked what particular program will be cut. Mr. Woods said the gifted program, where students will want specific requirements but we're at the point where there are nice things to have and things that we have to have. For example there may be trips to the science center, etc. Councilor Cohen asked about the stimulus program, for budgetary purposes it was put in the Federal Aid revenue and she assumed that was for the teachers. She said that the \$738,000 is just sitting there now, but it actually to cover teacher salaries. Mayor Lenares asked about the gifted program and how much money is being saved. Dr. Collins said that it's a half a position so it's probably around \$60,000 to \$70,000. Councilor Klett asked of the 2011 – 2012 staff class how much in dollars is the increase based on the teachers' contract. Mr. Woods said all of it, everyone's. Mayor Lenares asked in the special education transportation it's an increase of \$85,000 is that to transport student is going up \$85,000. (answer inaudible)

Councilor McBride said regarding the special education that cost is based in house and that amount is just for specific items and including teachers and some students. Dr. Collins said it's for specialists, anything with special needs, for bringing in someone from the outside. Councilor McBride asked how many students are presently in that program. Mr. Woods estimated about 65 to 70 students this year. Mr. Woods said that it really depends on the final appropriation, and we might decide that the program is out but it could possibly come back in again. Councilor Nagel said he's curious, about the difference in class size increases between the budget you presented and the Town Manager's budget, mainly the increase in the number of students. Mr. Woods said that looking at the numbers, it's difficult to determine, but probably an increase to about 25 – 26 at elementary, 28 at middle level and around 30 at high school level. Councilor Nagel said some money was included for technology. Mr. Woods said that the request for technology was 2.2 million dollars. He said that almost all of it was cut so all the \$90,000 would go into replacement of computers and readers, iPads, etc.

Councilor Bottalico said that a speaker mentioned tonight that we're ranked so much lower in spending per pupil at around \$13,000 per pupil. Mr. Woods said yes and that we were 92 out of 165 towns in the state. He said that about four years ago we were at 118 – 120. Councilor Bottalico asked also how many children we are bussing from out of town. Mr. Woods said about 52. Councilor Bottalico said it costs us about \$13,000 per student and we get \$2500, so it's costing us roughly \$10,000 per student, or over half a million dollars and it's mandated. Councilor Casasanta commented on the breakage, it noted \$3,000,000, is that correct? Mr. Woods said in the past what the board has done, is invested in new personnel and technology. Councilor McBride commented about bussing, these are outstanding students and one in particular, although not a Newington

resident this student has become an asset to this community and there is a definite benefit to this Town. Councilor Cohen asked about the special education funding from the State, is that for out placement or for others things. Mr. Woods said it's for both. Councilor Banach regarding the gifted program, what these programs do he sited four gifted student, one earning an MD and PHD working with threatening diseases, another went to Pfizer working on drug analysis, another working in biology, shocking fish (not killing) and brought them back for scientific purposes. Also the one student who went to Pfizer also worked with Dr. Henry Lee on Forensic science. He believes that this would be one program to be continued and not lost. Councilor Cohen said that when kids come through this system and not getting everything, it's not just the parents suffering it's the community losing. Councilor Bottalico commended Mr. Woods on trying to bring the teachers to the table with no success.

Mayor Lenares asked where Newington ranks compared to other districts in classroom numbers. Mr. Woods said that he can get that number for the Mayor. Mr. Woods said that it's a good idea to read the papers and believes that this Board of Education has done the right thing. Dr. Finkelstein mentioned a young women who had a young child, 6 years old, going to school in Bristol now, but went to Newington last year and loved it and can't wait to get back to Newington. Newington is one of the districts where people want to send their children. He said that there are a lot of systems that aren't stellar where people won't move to. It doesn't take much to lose that reputation; it's not just dollars and cents but the reputation of the Town. He said we have to be cautious to maintain that reputation.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - NONE

VI. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

Councilor Nasinnyk said of all the services provided by the Town, the Board of Education is a big plus and every year we're faced with the same challenge. Councilor Casasanta thanked the Board of Education for coming to the Council with their information and also mentioned the people in Japan and that all of our thoughts and prayers are with them.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Lenares moved to adjourn the meeting – 9:30 pm
Seconded by Councilor Nasinnyk
Vote 9 - 0

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Richard
Council Clerk