

Board of Education Minutes
February 6, 2013

A workshop of the North Stonington Board of Education was held on Wednesday, February 6, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. in the Wheeler High School Gymnasium Band Room. A special meeting was scheduled but there was not a quorum. Present were Mr. McCord, Mr. Mendolia, Dr. Robert, and Mr. Mathwich. Also present were Mr. Nero, Mr. McCarthy, Mrs. Costa, Mrs. Wilkison, Mr. Sandford, and Mr. Apicelli. Vice Chairman McCord called the workshop to order at 7:07 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance – The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mr. Nero read a statement into the record regarding the budget. (See Addendum) He gave a history of budget increases. He said the budget was at a 7.06% increase right now with the majority of that being fixed costs. He elaborated.

The Board proceeded to item 4.

3. Proposed for Executive Session – a. Discussion Concerning Teacher Non-Renewals – There was no quorum so this item was tabled.

4. Review of Proposed Elementary School Budget for 2013-2014 – Mrs. Wilkison reviewed her budget summary handout after going over the school goals. She thanked her staff for the work they do. She went over items that were removed from the budget even though they are needed. She reviewed the increases in the budget including those for the new math program. Questions were asked and answered.

5. Review of Proposed Middle/High School Budget for 2013-2014 – Mr. Sandford said their budget is tied to their core mission. He complimented his staff. He reviewed his budget. He pointed out that the majority of the personnel costs are for insurance increases. He reviewed the staff changes that have occurred since he has been here. He reviewed the items eliminated with this budget. Mr. Sandford went over additions to the budget and adjustments and reductions that were made. Further questions were asked and answered. Mr. Nero had comment.

6. Review of Proposed Special Education Budget for 2013-2014 – Mrs. Costa explained the goals that are listed in the summary. She reviewed the areas of her budget that increased as well as the budget totals. Mrs. Costa went over the sections of the budget and explained the changes due to an increase or a decrease. Questions were asked and answered. There was comment.

Questions were asked about the insurance aspect of the budget. There was discussion. There were other questions asked and answered.

7. Educational Specifications – Mr. Nero explained the packet he handed out. He had reviewed the ed. specs. and highlighted areas of concern or where there was a question. Questions were asked and answered.

The workshop ended at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta T. McCarthy, Secretary to
The Board of Education

ADDENDUM

Good Evening,

Tonight, the administrators will present their school and program based budgets. The histories of our annual budgets over the last several years reveal little or no significant increases in our appropriations. In fact, over the course of the last few years there haven't been hardly any increases.

A review the last seven annual budgets reveal the following:

06-07 4.8%

07-08 0.78%

08-09 2.24%

09-10 1.50%

10-11 0.00%

11-12 0.00%

12-13 0.12%

Due to a number of our school budgets being level-funded or near level-funded, programmatic cuts were made by the former superintendent, as well myself, during the first two months of my superintendence. This was done in order to meet the Town's appropriation. As you may recall, last August I met with my administrators and had to make a final cut of over \$300 thousand dollars to the 2012-2013 budget. Even last August, I realized that going forward with the 2013-2014 budget, the district was at barebones. Cutting the fiscal year 2012-2013 budget was extremely difficult especially when my tenure was only a few weeks.

You have heard me say at the last Board of Education meeting that you can squeeze an orange only so much before there isn't any juice left. Unfortunately, we are at that point. Quite frankly, there is anything more to be cut.

This year's budget, as of this date, reflects an increase of 7.06%. Most of the increase is in fixed costs which include salaries and benefits, as well as other state/federal mandates and contractual obligations. In other words the increases are required by law, regulation and contract. In education, our most valuable resource is human capital. Education is very labor intensive. As students pass from grade to grade and eventually graduate, they won't remember a textbook or computer program that they liked, but they will remember their favorite teachers and principals; the ones they loved and made the biggest impact on their educational lives.

In order to balance the last several budgets teachers and administrators have taken a 0% increase in their salaries. The same holds true for our other bargaining units. Even one of our vendors has taken a freeze in their contract with the district when they could have held us to our obligation. Last Year, M&J Bus Company was very gracious to the district and renegotiated the existing contract freezing our current rates for 2012-2013, at the same rate that they charged in the previous year, 2011-2012. They did that despite the unknown and volatile fluctuation of the cost of bus fuel.

There comes a time where corners can no longer be cut and there is nothing else left to trim. You will hear me often say when cuts need to be made we start with the "nice to have's" versus cutting the "must have's." Even this year, I've cut programs and beyond them, I cannot cut any more. I made the cuts for the 2013-2014 budget in order to add a math specialist at the elementary school and a reading specialist at the middle/high school. We have been requesting those positions for some time. They are a must have! In surveying budget requests of surrounding districts, I find interesting results. There are some that will be requesting modest increases between 1-3%. You should know that those same districts have received modest increases in their appropriations over the last several years of about 1-3%. Their budgets have kept pace with the economy to some degree. Those that are requesting larger increases are pretty much like us, they have received little to no increases over the last few years. There are some communities that are the anomaly which receive substantial increases year after year.

The administration is hoping to get much support for our budget during the 2013-2014 budget process as we work with the Board of Education. We have many meetings scheduled over the next couple of months. As much experience that I have with budgets, I am always willing to listen to any suggestion from any member of the community.