

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdDJNHr\\_SrI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdDJNHr_SrI)

Members of the Public: Due to COVID-19 & pursuant to Executive Orders 7B & 9H, the Town is holding this meeting via Webex & taking live public comment via Webex during the meeting.

- ✓ FairTV's webpage, <https://fairfieldct.org/fairtv/government>

**Board of Finance Public Budget Hearing #2 Final Minutes  
Tuesday, March 16, 2021  
7:30 pm**

The Board of Finance Public Budget Hearing was held virtually at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 16, 2020 in Fairfield, CT.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Edward Bateson, Jim Brown-Chair, Lori Charlton, Christopher DeWitt-Vice Chair, Mary LeClerc-Secretary, Sheila Marmion, John Mitola, Jack Testani, James Walsh

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent Mike Cummings, Executive Director of Finance and Business Services Doreen Munsell, Executive Director of Special Education and Student Services Robert Mancusi, Executive Director of Operations and Processes Dr. Zakia Parrish, Executive Director of Personnel and Legal Services, Title IX Coordinator Colleen Deasy, Executive Director of Operations Angelus Papageorge, BOE Chair Christine Vitale, Katie Flynn

1. Call to Order

Mr. Brown called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Brown led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Discussion on the Following Budgets:

**Board of Education**

8010 Board of Education Budget

Mr. Brown acknowledged all the participants from the BOE. BOE Chair Christine Vitale said there is a 5.91% increase in this budget. She said there is also \$2.5 million in finding for transportation which will be returned to the operational budget next year. Ms. Vitale said she is looking forward to the year ahead and moving past this pandemic.

Superintendent Mike Cummings shared his presentation which is in the backup as well. Mr. Brown then opened up the discussion to the Board.

Mr. Walsh thanked the participants from the BOE for being there and then referred to one of the points in the presentation. He asked Mr. Cummings what the school administration will do to promote racial equity. Mr. Cummings said there will be training and professional learning through grants. He said Central Office will also work on a curricular review and see if it reflects diversity. Mr. Walsh also asked about the plan to move past the pandemic. Mr. Cummings said he presented it in March and will revisit it in April to get assessments of students to see where there are deficits in learning and where learning has strengthened. Mr. Walsh asked if money was added in the budget to pay for it.

Mr. Cummings said no because some kids will have to go to summer school and he believes he will get grants to support it. He said certain grade levels will be targeted. Mr. Cummings said part of this will provide for students and part would provide for trainers for programs that would support students such as intervention programs. He said math belongs with literacy summer programs. He said there are four weeks of half-day instruction.

Ms. Marmion asked if there has been any discussions with other districts about sharing costs on regionalizing schools for summer school. Mr. Cummings replied that he speaks with other superintendents, but they have not discussed anything like that. He said he would be open to it, but they would need to work it all out.

Mr. Walsh asked about the Special Education population increasing and said there was a \$12.5 million cost avoidance in FY 20-21. Special Ed Director Rob Mancusi said building in-district programs was to avoid making out of district placements. He said FTE was added, but saved in out-placements. He said they are adding CLC (Complex Learner Cohort) at Dwight for the 21-22 school year for children with multiple disabilities. He said by starting this program, it will avoid out-placing some of these kids.

Ms. Charlton asked for the savings as the years go on and if acquiring the former Giant Steps building will bring more students into the district. Mr. Mancusi said the primary objective is to keep students from being outplaced. He said once outplaced, they have to show the parents that the district can service the students if they were to come back. He said they would like to incorporate a student triad of one teacher to three students. He said it will help make the students more independent. He said there is an annual IDA grant that pays for FTE equipment for students' needs and it is separate from the budget.

Mr. Walsh asked about the Early Literacy Academy pilot program for seven students. Mr. Mancusi said it is for students who have the most significant reading disabilities in grades 1-3. He said it includes professional development for up to 30 teachers and has a significant cost savings potential. Mr. Walsh also asked about the plan to relocate social workers. Title IX Coordinator Colleen Deasy said it is re-allocating some FTE from one budget to another. She said some social workers are moving to elementary schools and transferred their salaries to those schools. She said this has been requested from principals for years due to the level of anxiety and emotional struggles some kids are having and the pandemic has made it worse.

Mr. Mitola asked if they knew how much money they will get for the recovery and would it cover the air filter capacity or putting A/C in schools. Mr. Cummings said there is not a lot of detail in the relief act. He said it is not an expectation, but potential use could be air quality issues and it should be considered when requesting grants. Ms. Vitale said the State will prioritize what is needed for the districts. She said she did not want to diminish the need for the HVAC, but wanted to clarify that learning is the priority. Mr. Brown said the information about the State money is hard to follow. He asked if they knew how much it would be and when it would be received. Mr. Cummings said the ESSR2 funding application is due April 5. He said it could be used for learning loss, COVID expenses related to PPE and air quality, social and emotional learning support and HVAC. He said it is \$1.2 million over two years. Mr. Cummings said relief funding should address learning loss. He said once they get a better understanding they will move forward.

He said the district will apply for it and it will be \$3.15 million that could be spent over three calendar years. He said it would start with the 21-22 budget cycle. He said they are waiting for the application and when the information comes forth, he will share it.

Mr. Bateson asked what circumstance would have them keep RLA next year. Ms. Vitale said they did not build in for RLA, but the State could consider it for school districts. She said many costs from the State happen after budgets are approved and funding is a resource for this issue. Mr. Cummings said it will not necessarily be RLA, but remote learning. He said the State seems like it is leaning toward it next year, but kids will be remoting into the classroom and not RLA.

Mr. Walsh asked through the Chair Mr. Brown if the Board could get grant updates prior to the budget vote. Mr. Brown said the vote is on March 31 and the last meeting will be on March 29. He told Mr. Cummings to update the Board at that meeting, if he had an update.

There was a discussion about staff salary changes and benefits. Before going to the next budget item, Mr. Brown acknowledged resident Katie Flynn who was on the call to give her public opinion on the BOE budget. She read a letter in support of the original BOE budget.

The budget book was reviewed and there were many questions and discussions relating to staff costs and increases. Mr. Mancusi said OT/PT service costs have increased and they are looking for more efficient ways to give those services. He said there has been an increase in the number of evaluations and students in need of these services.

11030 Health and Welfare Services

Mr. Mancusi said there is a grant from the Town to locate and identify students who qualify for services in private schools. He said they have to let the families know the children would have the services if they attended public schools.

25331 Private School Bus Transportation

Ms. Munsell said they were able to decrease the number of buses on the non-public side. She said schools tell transportation how many kids need rides. She said this year ridership was not where they thought it would be and they reduced it by eight buses. She said they kept that amount for this budget and ridership could be up post-COVID and could cause additional expenses.

4. Adjourn

Mr. Testani made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11 pm. Mr. Walsh seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Pru O'Brien  
Recording Secretary