

SCHOOL BUDGET AD HOC MEETING

15-C

April 13, 2010

The School Budget Ad Hoc Committee meeting was called to order on April 13, 2010 in the Council Chambers at City Hall. The meeting room was changed to the Council Chambers due to the large number of attendees. Chairman Colleen Stanley called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. Committee members Councilman Arconti, Councilman Riley, Councilwoman Nancy Deep-Damici and Councilman Chianese were present.

Dr. Sal Pasquarella, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. William Glass, Deputy Superintendent of Schools; Louis Brey, Human Resources Director, Elio Longo, Finance Director from the school administration were present. David St. Hilaire, Finance Director for the City of Danbury and Laszlo Pinter, Deputy Corporation Counsel were also present.

Irving Fox, Chairman, Joseph Scozzafava, Richard Jannielli, Eileen Alberts, Michael Fazio and Robert Taborsak of the Board of Education were in attendance.

Ex-Officio members Councilman Nero, Councilman Visconti, Councilman Trombetta, Councilwoman Teicholz, Councilman Rotello, Councilman Seabury and Councilman Cavo were also present

Councilwoman Stanley thanked everyone for attending the ad hoc meeting and stated that she appreciates all of the hard work on the budget. The City Council members take the matter very seriously.

Irving Fox, BOE Chair addressed the committee. The proposed budget is approx \$1M below the amount needed. The largest cuts have been made to support services.

M. Fazio, BOE Finance Committee Chair, stated that the Mayor's proposal is fair and equitable. The Committee has worked hard to cut costs and have restructured without major impacts to the students. The committee understands they must balance the needs of the school system against the ability of the taxpayers to pay.

Dr. Glass provided a PowerPoint presentation demonstrating the impact of the 0% allocation for FY 2009-2010 and the proposed 1.8% increase to the budget FY 2010-2011. A copy is available in the office of the Legislative Assistant.

E. Long discussed the BOE approved budget request for FY 2010-2011 to add 3.81% to the budget and the Mayor's proposal to add 1.79% for FY 2010-2011. Cost saving measures were discussed, in particular areas of containment/avoidance.

L. Brey discussed the staff reductions and the impact on classrooms, the approach with the unions, concerns for test score regression, custodial overtime and maintenance costs.

Councilman Seabury, ex-officio, inquired about a pay freeze for the "cabinet". Dr. Pasquarella advised that the item would be considered at a later date.

Councilman Riley thanked the administrators for the presentation and distribution of information. He acknowledged that a balance must be achieved between the funding requested and approved and the taxpayers' ability to pay, especially during these difficult economic times.

Irving Fox explained that over the years budget lines have been reduced and it is at a point where classrooms would be negatively impacted with further reductions.

Councilman Cavo made an inquiry regarding suspension of one step for one year to affect some cost savings.

Chairwoman Stanley invited teachers to speak. Melissa Laurenco, AIS Magnet School; Maria Sorrentino, AIS Magnet School; Kirsten Lang, Ellsworth Avenue School; Carmen Fernandez, Morris Street School, Michelle Keenan, a member of the public offered comments pursuant to the budget.

Councilman Chianese explained that the City Council votes out a lump sum but, does not determine how the funds are spent.

Chairwoman Stanley stated that 60% of every tax dollar goes to education and that the Council has no say over how the funds are spent. Parents need to go to the Board of Education and administration with their individual concerns. She urged the committee to be mindful of the City's ability to fund the BOE budget.

Councilman Arconti moved to accept the Mayor's proposed budget regarding the Board of Education allocation in the amount of \$114,103,866 (which includes \$208,575 Code 6001.5852 for Health & Welfare and \$113,895,291 Code 6000.5852 Regular). seconded by Councilman Riley. Chairwoman Stanley, Councilwoman Deep-Damici, Councilman Arconti and Councilman Riley voted in favor. Councilman Chianese abstained. ***Motion passed by majority vote.***

Councilman Arconti moved to adjourn at 9:15 PM, seconded by Councilman Riley. ***Motion passed by unanimous vote.***

Colleen Stanley, Chair

Robert Arconti

Nancy Deep-Damici

Robert Riley

Benjamin Chianese