

Chairwoman Colleen Stanley called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m. on Wednesday, April 22, 2009, in the Room 3C, 3rd Floor, Danbury City Hall, 155 Deer Hill Avenue. Present was Committee members Michael Calandrino, N. Jane Diggs (*entered as indicated below*), Robert Riley and Fred Visconti. Also present were David St. Hilare, Finance Director; Dan Garrick, Assistant Finance Director (*entered as indicated below*); Wayne Shepard, Chief of Staff; Dr. Sal V. Pascarella, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools; Dr. William R. Glass, Deputy Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Robert F. Dylewski, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Elio Longo, Finance Director for the Board of Education; Members of the Board of Education: Kathleen Molinaro, Richard Jannelli, Robert Taborsak, Eileen Alberts, and Gladys Cooper. Ex Officio Members: Gregg Seabury, Jack Knapp, Paul Rotello, Joseph Cavo, Louise McMahon, Mary Teicholz, Benjamin Chianese (*entered as indicated below*), Thomas Saadi (*entered as indicated below*) and Robert Arconti. Also present were members of the public.

Chairwoman Stanley introduced everyone present at the meeting.

Chairwoman Stanley opened up the meeting by asking Dr. Sal Pascarella to give an overview of the proposal before the Committee. Dr. Pascarella pointed out how careful and mindful of the state of the economy they were while putting together their budget proposal. The reduction to their budget was to be \$6.6 million which represents 5.9% of an increase. Of the 5.9%, 5.2% was needed in order to move forward. \$118.5 million was for curriculum restructuring, infrastructure needs and faculty increases due to enrollment at the middle school. At the onset of the budget discussions, a directive was given to achieve a 3% increase. The target was now \$115.3 million. The Board took a look at early retirement and enrollment and, in doing so, their budget was reduced to \$115 million which represents \$3.2 million in budget cuts. Dr. Pascarella pointed out that between last year and this year, 55 positions have been lost in the district. In order to achieve the 3%, 72 positions were offered early retirement packages. Of the 72 positions, 4 were administrators. The savings at an administrator level is not as great. The remaining 68 positions provided a substantial savings of approximately \$1.5 million. In addition, there was a reduction of 22 positions at the elementary school level and high school level. A review was conducted with regard to high school enrollment, course electives and programs, and elementary projection. 11 positions were eliminated at the middle school level. Of concern is the possibility of an increase in enrollment due to the economy and the inability for families to continue paying for private and parochial schooling. A more definitive picture will occur in August. Dr. Pascarella continued reviewing the various areas of reductions which included the renegotiation of the teachers' contracts and insurance company contract. The Board has worked hard to look outside the classrooms for reductions. \$600,000.00 of the stimulus funding can be used toward general education. In order to reach the 0% discussed, \$112 million needs to be allocated to the education budget. At present, there is a shortfall of \$1.4 million to reach their goal of 5.2%. Dr. Pascarella's suggestion to help with the shortfall was to reallocate the money the City will be receiving as a result of the sale of a building. He urged the Committee consider this alternative in order to avoid further reductions that will directly affect the students and their education.

Dan Garrick, Assistant Finance Director, Wayne Shepard, Chief of Staff, Councilman Benjamin Chianese, Councilman Thomas Saadi and Councilwoman Jane Diggs entered at this time.

Mr. Longo pointed out that the education budget has addressed almost half of the reductions via the \$3.2 million. Councilman Riley asked if there was a chance there would be money left over from the '08/'09 school year budget. Mr. Longo explained that while two-thirds of the fiscal year is behind us, expenses are incurred during the months July and August as a result of the summer programs and salaries for year-round employees. He reminded the Council that they begin each fiscal each approximately \$600,000-\$700,000 in the hole because

Dr. Pascarella is exploring options at the State level and suggested reducing the number of school days as it costs \$450,000 per day to run schools. It is an option that should be explored rather than continuing the cuts that have occurred with regard to staffing and programs. Chairwoman Stanley reminded everyone that while this year has been difficult, the years to come will be even more difficult financially. Councilman Riley felt \$500,000 to \$1 million could be saved on staff development if more creative methods were utilized and used the Alternative High School's methods as an example. They have ongoing weekly internal staff development. Councilwoman Diggs questioned why the expense of Worker's Compensation was so high and how was it being addressed. Mr. Longo pointed out that the greatest cost increase in Worker's Compensation was not as a result of an increase in volume of claims. The total cost increase is more as a result of having to set aside a fund with the City to address prior year's claims on an annual basis. A number of the claims are custodial related. He explained that the employees are being educated on safety measures. Over the past two years, there has been a reduction in claims overall which has resulted in a 0% increase in the premium costs. Councilwoman Diggs questioned whether students attending Danbury schools from other towns pay a special tax/fee. Dr. Pascarella explained that when cases are brought to their attention where students attending Danbury schools are not from Danbury, there is an individual assigned to investigate and confirm the suspicion. Once confirmed, the student is asked to leave immediately. Dr. Dylewski explained that last year, approximately 8-10 students were asked to leave the district or to pay the tuition. At the high school level, the cost is approximately \$10,000. There is a small number who choose to pay the tuition and stay in Danbury. With regard to the sale of the University building, Mayor Boughton explained that the grand opening of the school would occur approximately July 1st. The closing of the University's school would occur sometime after July 1st. However, he does not anticipate receiving the funds from the State quickly. An environmental remediation must be completed prior to turning the school back over to the University. Mayor Boughton suggested committing to half of the funds and reserving the remainder for future needs. He commended the Board on their hard work with this year's budget. Councilman Riley questioned the rate for substitute teachers going up from \$75 to \$90 and whether or not it was compatible to neighboring towns. Dr. Pascarella explained last year, regional partners paid \$90 or \$95 per day. Danbury was unable to secure substitutes at the \$75 per day rate. The cost increase is being offset by the reduction in staffing. Mr. St. Hilaire and Mr. Longo have been exploring various opportunities between the City and the School to find cost savings areas outside of staff reductions (i.e. health care contracts, fuel contracts, utility contracts, vendor contracts).

A motion was made by Councilman Visconti and seconded by Councilman Riley that the Committee recommends to the Common Council that they accept the Mayor's proposed budget of \$112,103,866.00 and to appropriate \$600,000.00 from the sale of the Robert's Avenue School in order to preserve the extra curricular activities for the schools. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Visconti and seconded by Councilman Riley. The motion carried unanimously at 7:04 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Stanely, Chairwoman

Michael Calandrino

N. Jane Diggs

Robert Riley

Fred Visconti