

1. Call Meeting to Order – The Regular Meeting of the **Town of Plymouth Board of Finance** was called to order on **Thursday, March 18, 2010 at 7:02 p.m.** by Chairman Ralph Zovich in the Community Room, Plymouth Town Hall.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call – Members of the Board of Finance in attendance: Pat Budnick, Vicky Carey, Peter Cook (left at 7:35 p.m.), Mike Drozdick, Dan Murray, Ralph Zovich. Also present, David Bernagel, Director of Finance; Mayor Festa; Robin Gudczauskas, Recording Secretary. Board of Education members in attendance: Dr. Distasio, Superintendent; Mike Santogatta, Business Manager; Tommy Meehan, Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Education Services; Mr. Pat Perugino, Chairman of the BOE stated a quorum of his Board is present.
4. Presentation of Bd. of Education Budget for FY2010-11 by Superintendent – Dr. Distasio, thanked the BOF on behalf of the BOE on the amount of time put into the budget each year. Power point presentation given with review of the Mission statement, five goals; background of 2009-2010 budget and proposed 2009 – 2010 budget. BOE is still located at Main Street with the fire marshal and human services. The proposed budget is a 2.3% increase or \$526,471. Cost savings initiatives reviewed noting outsourcing of cafeteria program, energy educators. Mike Santogatta reviewed additional cost savings for a total of \$181,800. Total savings of \$319,672. Proposals of initial budget to the finance subcommittee was 2.6% and the Board trimmed back to 2.3% and what is presented. Budget comparison of 2009-2010 and proposed 2010-2011 reviewed noting increase in certified staff, non certified, administrative for a total of \$363,236 in salary; benefits are down \$33,723 for proposed budget; instructional costs are up \$14,586; Operation cost up \$30,533; out of district up \$168,654; Extracurricular up \$4,908; Other/miscellaneous up \$7,449 for a total increase of \$526,471. Possible reductions if have to reduce budget to a zero budget would include about 90% of items listed.
5. Discussion by Bd. of Finance
 - a. Dan Murray – (a) He is goal oriented and goals were set last year and how do you quantify the same goals year in and out. Dr. Distasio – set them on grade by grade basis and some do better than others and extremely pleased with CT Mastery test results from 3-8 and in particular middle school where all 10 went up in proficiency. Elementary most grades had increase. Met goals in elementary and middle and will be watching for future but are extremely pleased with Goal 1. (b) Student body that moves from one position that drops collectively and do not know anomaly or environment, school, or social changes. Dr Distasio stated high school is not a change as students are tested in 10th grade and are comparing those students with same students across the state. Our students last year took dip against the state. He explained grade 8 is one test and grade 10 is a totally different test. Pat Budnick, (a) part of presentation addressed cutting insurance reserve twice and how much over at this point. Mike Santogatta, took \$300,000 out of reserve and cut contribution to 2.3 million and reserve went down around \$300,000 and last year had 9 months in reserve and now have a 10 month reserve on hand. Reason looks so good is experience at 82.3% of what Anthem forecasted. Also in some negotiated contracts the employee's contribution has gone up also and helped. The Actuary looks at what expended and recommends what should budget for following year, reviewed. Ralph Zovich stated the Auditor's report for fiscal year ending June 30th stating you are very healthy. Pat budget number is same projection as last year but in

event experience level only 82% than you might have more to the good; mike, cannot get hurt in that account next year. (b) Charges for preschool began this school year and where is income offset. Mike Santogatta, offset against particular salaries in that account and will start in next fiscal year and roughly \$10,000 will be taken in. Mike Drozdick, (a) mentioned saving \$100,000 with cafeteria change and have they performed to expectations. Dr. Distasio, had issue and had parent meeting and about 12 parents attended and expressed concerns, reviewed on types of food offered and made adjustments, some of the issues were with communication with parents to access account which they can do on line and can access what children are eating. Overall experience is numbers up. (b) ESOL, savings or drop. Dr. Distasio, will reduce program as students no longer in program and will reduce teaching load. Ralph Zovich, summary slide of comparison of cost areas, reviewed on where fixed costs and of \$526,000 increase you have \$363,000 in contractual salary increases; decrease in instructional costs has direct impact on students; operation costs up \$30,000 and in that are structural savings accrued such as fuel, energy reduction and if he had to go after savings would like operational cut vs. instructional. Chairman Zovich read letter from BOE to BOF into record dated March 10th.

Dr. Distasio reviewed some of the unfunded mandates noting the program replacing BEST, which is TEAM, and no money attached to bill which will cost \$10,000 to institute; seatbelts in buses and a myriad of others in there one of which is prevailing wage. Ralph Zovich noted last year was in school suspension; discussion held. Revenue – will get \$9,727,569 in ECS, transportation \$422,636 for a total of \$10,515,020 and Special Ed for total grant appropriation of \$10,597,872.

Discussion by School:

Main Street School – no questions

Prospect Street – no questions

Plymouth Center – up \$50,262 in contractual salary increases

HS Fisher – up \$66,924 one of largest increases; Pat Budnick (a) on building maintenance what is additional; Mike Santogatta, put money in for windows to be replaced and did some doors last year and working on windows on west side of building; 6 classrooms are done. (b) What is figure in capitals and if done that way a savings and please verify if there is reimbursement for window replacement for energy savings. Ralph Zovich, comparison question in music salary 82,109 is that one teacher or two. Dr. Distasio, have one full time teacher and split a band teacher between two elementary schools.

Eli Terry Middle School - up \$30,643; contractual salary costs. Pat Budnick, social studies is down; Dr. Distasio, teacher moved from middle to high school and replaced by less experienced teacher. Increase in bldg maintenance; Mike Santogatta, roof situation of 14,000 sq ft section is about 34 years old and beyond economic life and issues with snow and ice, aggravated and roof sags; had to close down 2 classrooms due to 38 leaks, put down 25, 5 gallon pails of asphalt; now have a company going there to put down a film of asphalt to spray down to mitigate issues having. Currently no snow or ice and roof recovered and hope that will take care of rain between now and June. Will go out for bid for architectural drawing and talking with Dept of Education and had gentleman go up to do samples and core of roof is masonite board and all borings saturated; drop ceiling tiles removed and area would be completely saturated, and it is dripping and running down from there; this section is original section of building put on in 1980 and

put over original section. Expensive roof to replace. Ralph Zovich stated Vicky Carey is liaison to Capital Improvements and they understand this situation and it will be a capital item, require bonding and to referendum. Mike Santogatta stated that roof needs to be replaced and the \$44,000 in budget is for maintenance and will exceed what is in there for this year and money in Emergency Repairs will also be used this year for roof. Pat Budnick questioned Maintenance increase; Mike Santogatta stated that is the figure there and cannot tell what it will be used for but they continue to run into issues in that building, reviewed, and this is figure and can spend less or more; have had issues, lights that do not turn off because rewired a different way. Pat questioned whether there are some of these being corrected by companies who did it wrong. Mike Santogatta stated some are and some are not noting the gym floor will cost \$12,000-13,000 as it took a beating during renovation and wood floor needs to be sanded, varnished and will last another 10-15 years and part of money in budget.

Terryville High School – up \$104,391; (a) Chemical Safety Disposal; Mike Santogatta stated for labs, need to stay on top and ongoing. (b) Page 14 account 5900, Business Other Purchases. Mike Cerruto, computer programs for business department. (c) Telephone, budget \$9400 and projecting \$6000 and \$9000 again. Mike Santogatta, received grant e-rate, tremendous job and claimed website and additional reimbursement and do not know if will get it next year. Vicky Carey, phone bills, total almost \$50,000 for phones in system and are there cell phones out there, how many and who. Dr. Distasio, it is lower than it was and last year did assessment of cell phones and had over 30 and reduced to only essential people and coaches have them at sporting events and certain special Ed personnel depending on students for safety reason and do have a very low rate. Cell phones are about \$950 per month. Mike Drozdick, fuel oil at high school added \$6,000 to what is projected on page 15. Mike Santogatta, showing using 6000 less than budgeted but did budget same amount of dollars as this year, did not know where they would be next year in gallon price and have gone out to bid and awarded contract a week ago at \$2.31/gallon; some fuel numbers can be adjusted down. Ralph Zovich noted with drop in natural gas is there any benefit in burning more natural gas; Mike Santogatta, not yet. Discussion held. Ralph Zovich (a) Swat. Dr. Distasio, is an alternate program, alternative education. (b) Line 118, Dept Chair salary, page 14, department chair is stipends and when get to Student Services there is another for 6-12 department heads and is that redundant. Dr. Distasio, 6-8 is middle school and at high school have 9-12. (c) On System-wide Services page 21, 1/3 way down says gr 6-12 department chairs. Dr. Distasio, that should read 9-12 as made change last year. Had department chairs across the board and now have 9-12 and 6-8. (d) An area before cut instructional supplies or summer program and those are stipends and would go first and would make more work for him to coordinate work between middle and high; would imagine to cut stipends than heads. Dr. Distasio, we will cut whatever has least impact on kids.

School Facilities - \$322 increase; Ralph why are you paying snowplowing when we have new town trucks and for now have understanding to keep line item in until have agreement with Public Works and timing and scheduling is issue.

Student Services, increase of \$192,114 – 08 actual budget had one less special education teacher at \$850,000 and proposed \$962,860 and looks like one additional. Dr. Distasio, yes it is and program is to bring outplaced students back to our district. Pat Budnick, (a) \$30,000 increase from current to new is salary. For para from 439 to 462 is salary. Dr.

Distasio, there is half time para in that account we did not have last year. (b) in 08 at 345 and 09 at 410. Dr. Distasio, it could have been another person and at times have choice to add para or place a student out of district at additional cost. (c) What have you done to bring outplacement back in and how has stimulus money been spent. Tommy Meehan, stimulus, put some aside to bring in teacher to open program in high school and had to give a year and part of that also have looked at to make sure operate at best and improvement. Have recently gone over lists out there and identified 2-3 that can bring back; going to place somewhere else and they have reason for kid to stay there; but we have reason we have program not here before. If bring back may need to spend \$20,000-25,000 to put para in program because kids are from confined area to different structure and somebody needs to facilitate transition. Ralph Zovich, we have \$977,000 budgeted for outplacement non public and \$471,000 for public and total of \$1,400,000 and project to go up to \$1,060,000 for non public and have we factored in 2-3 students or could there be more potential savings. Tommy Meehan, there can be more, the situation is contingent on where coming from. Mike Santogatta, it could come down and budgeted for what spending this year. Discussion held. Ralph Zovich, under funded mandate and reimbursement capping. Dr. Distasio, one other push with legislator is to change where burden of proof falls; have asked legislation to change burden of proof so in line with federal law and rest of states in country. Vicky Carey (a) psychology salary, did you omit or get rid of. Dr. Distasio, reduced. (b) What is System wide Special Ed co, 1112. Dr. Distasio, coordinator, saw line item for psychologist and redo position to reduce stipend position of special ed coordinator and eliminate speech person and make special ed coordinator and net savings to budget of \$15,000. The psychologist position is going and this position coming and a wash in terms of salaries and savings from stipends that pay for special Ed coordinator, 4, and have one person doing coordination for position. We have 3 psychologists and will have 2.

Health services, modest

ESOL – Dr. Distasio, reduced position instead of 5 day full time reduced to 4 day position and save salary money.

System Wide Services, up \$66,137 – grade 6-8 department chairs; difference between non certified subs and purchased subs non certified. Mike Santogatta, some are interns and some through agency; purchase are through agency and same with certified through Kelly agency; others are interns. VoAg enrollment up; Mike Santogatta, ten students were accepted into Wamogo. Ralph Zovich (a) \$100,000 for early retirement which is down from current budget and do we have feel for number in this year; Mike Santogatta, ending June 30; (b) when you hire you will be hiring at lower salary and is that reflected in budget. Dr. Distasio, we had an early notification incentive when budget was put together and since budget put together we have 2 retirees and not reflected in budget and some savings we will incur. (c) Unemployment is projected in deficit and why would we have more unemployment than anticipated; Mike Santogatta, this year we had administrator before that left and left that job and collected and we were responsible for 3 of 4 quarters and did have some cafeteria exposure. (d) Pension payment same and as people retire, contribution goes down; Mike Santogatta, not in certified area.

Central is up \$10,000 – Ralph Zovich, budgeting second year in row where our superintendent is not taking increase and applaud him for that. Mike Drozdick (a) new guy and on general slide budget comparison and changes from last year and proposed and last item Taxes/benefits, what is that composed of. Mike Santogatta, social security,

Medicare, unemployment, early retirement, non certified pension. (b) 70% of your increase is salary and his social security is frozen; Plainville has a freeze on salaries, would like to comment. Dr. Distasio, has not gone to union to ask for concession and reason is there is tsunami heading toward CT next year and if things go the way he thinks, we will get reduction of ECS money and if go to bargaining units this year for zero increase and go again next year it would not work. Holding off until backs are against the wall. Project \$6 billion deficit next year in CT. We have been fortunate of savings from things we have done in this district.

6. Public Comment

a. Melanie Church, 328 Main Street, notice on this year's budget nothing done as comparison on student enrollment decrease or increase and that has a bearing on a budget and noticed when talk about laying off guidance counselor, to her that is one of the more important jobs to get kids ready to go out to colleges and other schools and devastating to lose a guidance counselor. Looked at wages and 2 counselors and if divide in two it equals School to Career and to her guidance has a lot more education and need to keep and take over. 2, there are not a lot of jobs out there. In town read annual budget our unemployment is 10.5 and you need to look at this budget and people out there and can't keep waiting until next year and will increase taxes this year on people out there and you as BOF need to take all into account. Surprised when looked to see no enrollments. 2. Over summer compared to Wolcott we did not do too well in Mastery and CAPT testing and remark was we spend way more money than they do and our scores are lower and not always money put but quality of what is given. Also we need to look at enrollment to break it down. In private sector if you look outside the box the way the town side is on combining jobs and people can go to different areas it is time for the board to do that also. Dr. Distasio stated regarding actual enrollment numbers, the State of CT did enrollment projections for us and 3 years ago stopped and chose to spend money or projections or basically go on enrollments see within district and down about 30 kids from last year to this; projections look at in terms of actual students will decline slightly over next 5 years but nothing drastically to change the budget. 1825 now is current student body. Budgeted for additional ten to go to VoAg and counted as total students in district but not in town enrollment.

b. DiAnna Schenkel, 4 East Orchard Street, Council person and speaking as resident. Congratulations on a wonderful presentation; very impressed with way keep open mind and willing to work with the town to make this beneficial for everyone. Respectfully disagree on school to career comment and as a supporter in business world have offered to be a mentor, write grants and have worked with and watched Lisa Aiudi work with children and if think she is not an integral part of student to college or interview for job, wrong. The roundedness she brings to these children and awareness has not only encouraged to expand horizon or limited jobs but allows to find a career to make difference in commuting and work. Goal not only to have educated people is to have taxpayers come back to our community and help offset cost of running the town. Many students would fall by the wayside but because she offers beacon of light and as mentor, counselor and person who can encourage through local government programs, Mr. Nave's program and being person to listen to. Have seen her at so many fundraising events with the kids, lions member, Leos,

she is a bargain and her whole staff and everyone who she helps is amazing and respect her tremendously. School to career is undervalued and understated example but give BOE and this administration the applause that they recognize school to career fills an integral need in the shaping of our students. Dr. Distasio, would be remiss if not say something about school to career that goes way beyond school to career. The Leo Club is the largest club in the State of CT, over 130 students in that club under tutelage of Mrs. Aiudi and the school business partners, mentor program, KIM under school to career, and can go on and on and Mrs. Schenkel is right on target and biggest bargain in Plymouth. Ralph Zovich, we did not have comment from the Board on guidance and to clarify the proposal did not say anything about laying off, it is eliminating extra days. Dr. Distasio, if reduction got low enough it is something we would consider. Guidance is very important to our district but when it gets tough you have to consider everything. Ralph Zovich, the Board of Finance has no authority for changes in department or line items and it is up to the Board of Education to trim areas. For those following congress, no child left behind is up for reauthorization and the president's proposal is to eliminate 100% proficiency goal by 2014 and replace it with something called career or college ready with recognition not all will go to college and we need to provide with career or vocational training.

- c. Steve Misluk, 2 Fairmount Ave, read into record a letter by he and wife written to Dr. Distasio and Mr. Meehan and the BOE dated March 14, 2010 on preschool program at Fisher Elementary School. Mr. Misluk gave background information on application process for 4 day program, choice of am or pm noting on form that tuition fee may be imposed. Their child was accepted in morning session but later learned that morning is 3 day a week and understand modification are necessary to keep programs going but questioned why 3 days and afternoon is still 4 day week. The Board of Education preschool is two different program with 2 different curriculums and why. Preschool should prepare to transition into kindergarten and with two different programs one group is prepared more than another. Would like the BOE to consider restoring 4th day back to morning and if not can you change both programs; morning session at 3 days and afternoon 4 days and then morning to 4 day and afternoon 3 days. If neither option is possible he asked them to consider removing 4th day in order to give children equal time. If they had known morning would be 3 day they would not have applied and after speaking with other parents find they would have considered other options as well. In response to their letter they were contacted by Dr. Distasio who explained this program cut strictly for budgetary reasons, no way to restore or give students equal access to classroom room. He asked why a.m. was cut and response was 6 of one half a dozen of another and making decision arbitrary. He asked the BOF not to approve the budget until the BOE restores or provides equal access to classroom to both a.m. and p.m. Chairman Zovich noted in the Superintendent's potential cuts they may have to charge 80% reduction and operational as budget question. The programs are operational and under scheduling of the Superintendent and as far as the budget there is one line item for prek. Dr. Distasio, the question was could we switch half year with program and response was that they would inconvenience more parents due to schedule change to accommodate next schedule. He gave background of correspondence noting in initial letter he did not have BOE approval for changes proposed. If he did not send out a

letter there would not have been enough time to get people enrolled and he did get BOE approval to shorten program by one day. Originally a 5 day program and actually 4 day a week for 3 and 4 year old and 5th day used to do testing and home visits. Looked for budget saving issues and if cut one day can save about \$10,000 out of salary of instructor and to make sure there was enough time to do visits and testing gave instructor a half day and did 3 year old program in am and 4 year in pm. We are not under any mandate to have preschool programs and something we choose to do. 3 year old for 3 days in am and 4 year old program in afternoon. Mr. Misluk stated his son is 4 year old student in am class and nothing stated morning was for 3 year old and afternoon 4 year old and simply through lottery. Why is his student put in am if 3 year old program. Dr. Distasio, as a result of typical peer proportion and special ed mandate on peer ratio. Ralph Zovich stated we have had a discussion with the BOE and Dr. Distasio has gone through the budget and been patient with us on line item questions but the BOF does not specify and can make no recommendations on how they put line items. For the record, in Student Services budget line was expense of \$51,000 last year for prek and budgeted at \$55,103 and that is a block of money and how the administration chooses to use and pay teacher, we do not have any say and it is an operational management decision. You have a good point and something to talk with elected officials on the BOE. As far as budget proposal we cannot reduce that pre k. Mr. Misluk stated the only reason he brought it up was because he was told strictly budgetary reason and before finance and he wanted to let finance know. Dr. Distasio suggested that when the Board revisits the budget once the BOF makes cuts, the BOE will need to discuss and meetings you should come to discuss.

Chairman Zovich reviewed process noting there are 3-4 more regular BOF meetings and will make decision shortly and transmit to the Superintendent and Business Manager and they will decide which alternatives and then we will go to the public hearing required by law in the third week of April before April 23rd due to Charter. After that under the Charter the budget goes to referendum and voted on before May 3rd.

7. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn by Vicky Carey; second Pat Budnick and the vote unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Gudeczauskas
Recording Secretary