

Town of Plymouth

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Board of Finance

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1. Call Meeting to Order – The Regular Meeting of the Town of Plymouth Board of Finance was called to order on Thursday, March 24, 2011 at 7:08 p.m. in the Community Room, Plymouth Town Hall. Members in attendance: Pat Budnick, Vicky Carey, Peter Cook, Mike Drozdick, Dan Murray, Ralph Zovich. Also in attendance: Mayor Vincent Festa; Dr. Tony Distasio, Superintendent of Schools; Mike Santogatta, Business Manager; Peter Lovely, Director of Curriculum; Tommy Meehan, Director of Pupil and Personnel Services; Robin Gudeczauskas, Recording Secretary; Patrick Perugino, Chairman, BOE who stated a quorum of the Board of Education is present.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Review and Discussion of Proposed General Fund Budget for FY 2011-2012 – Dr. Distasio stated mimeo technology is used in schools as teaching tool and thanked George Bikakis for assistance in preparing tonight's presentation; reviewed. Peter Lovely reviewed interdistrict grants; discussion on enrollments in town and those who attend magnet and tech schools, etc. Budget categories detail reviewed and overall budget with zero percent increase of \$22,996,115 current and proposed budget. Budget explanations per category reviewed. Job salary from PCS and HSF are through stimulus money but next year go away unless they can be maintained through attrition; salary accounts down due to retirements and new people coming in at lower salaries for a savings; STAR teacher equalizes programs between PCS and HSF; health services increase in nurses salaries and in negotiations with nurses and number may change; BOE up 4.2% and \$7,000 has been put into mediation expenses if have to go to arbitration. Budget comparisons reviewed; operation costs down \$39,188 and due to hiring of energy educator and Mr. Sandshaw in process of writing grant to purchase a greenhouse (video reviewed on energy conservation). Mike Santogatta reviewed the minimum budget requirement noting state law that a BOE figure should be the same as it was the year before if taking ECS money and if less than previous year than the state imposes a 2 for 1 penalty, reviewed. Peter Lovely, job stimulus money and did not expend last year or into this budget, explained next year \$100,000-110,000 will go into salary account for two positions and when money goes away so do those two positions. Have 4 positions for instructional support, 2 with middle and high and the other 2 in elementary schools; slide reviewed. Future goals reviewed. Board member comments: Dan Murray (a) page 34 of presentation, there is nothing on science; Pete Lovely, high school is changing schedule which will open a variety of opportunity in amount and quality of electives in science, math, English, social studies; instructional supervisors, one working now at high school from Ed Connection who helps teachers design lessons to bring to higher quality. (b) glad to see statistical accumulation of scores in last three years and focusing on areas with challenges associated and one will lead to another. Vicky Carey, state and educational group are more mandates, unfunded, and do you know what they are and how impact us

as heard from the Governor there are no unfunded for education but hearing that education body are working on a few; Dr. Distasio stated a number are still in committee phase and just wrote letter to both legislators, 4 page letter, on how many unfunded before committees. One with high school reform, additional testing, supervision, bullying law and require supervisor at each building responsible for bullying and hard to say what they will actually be and nothing set in stone. Mike Drozdick (a) comment made on MSS and can you clarify; Dr. Distasio stated that is up \$8,000 and 14.3% and status quo and energy costs are up in this building. (b) consortium price on oil; Mike Santogatta, price not locked in and did go out to bid and opened bid and document allows us to strike and utilize markup in 60 day period from March 21st going forward stating if struck on the 21st, fuel would \$3.23 and diesel \$3.29 and currently oil is \$2.31 and diesel \$2.35.5 for diesel; #2 fuel oil we did budget \$2.80 per gallon in this budget; every year budgeting less gallons noting when came they were using 135,000 gallons and this year 115,000 and next 105,000 gallons and could change depending on weather. Pat Budnick (a) heat, have we saved from new roof at Eli Terry; Mike Santogatta, definitely and we continue to refine that school and high school and operating more efficiently thanks to Joe Dennis and Marty and they can tell us by the day how much fuel used; reviewed. They have also watched water usage. (b) transportation, bussing regular is zero increase; Mike Santogatta, yes and holding with present budget now and contract runs out on June 30th and BOE directed to go out to bid for regular and special ed and out of district vocation schools and hoping to use less bussing because we are trying to coordinate bussing with other districts in our area. Increases over last few years have been very low, reviewed. Number of field trips are down and athletic transportation down a bit and controlled some of the SWAT transportation to high school. (c) does contract provide for so much diesel; Mike Santogatta, we provide for so much diesel \$30,000 regular and out of district/vocational and WAMS and once get to 30,000 gallons than it is contractor responsible for diesel and estimate they use 11,000 gallons more. Cost in budget in diesel; above and beyond not our expense; details reviewed. Diesel and oil are in consortium price. (d) Special Ed, one teacher added as well as one aid; Mike Santogatta, special ed aid account is down from year before; social worker salary up. Dr. Distasio stated this current year have emotional disturbed program at PCS, need it at FES and a STAR program for Fisher and will not have to transport kids and can do it in home school; able to bring some back to district; will prevent situation where kid might need to go out and we have program in district. Peter Cook, tough to question a zero increase budget. Dr. Distasio noted they start negotiations with teachers union in early part of next year. Chairman Zovich (a) governor said no cut in ECS funding and have \$9,743,000 in our budget. School transportation, no increase. Special ed transportation grant going down; Mike Santogatta, there is no special ed grant and the general government receives excess special ed cost grant. (b) \$367,900 for next year and \$243,000 for regular transportation; in this budget \$430,000 for special ed out placement, excess cost reimbursement and we are budgeting \$475,000 which is higher; Mike Santogatta, that is moving target as kids go out, come back, move out of town and have two high cost children within school system and never reported on excess cost and have now done that and grossed up based on special ed service, wheelchair services and nursing services. (c) the school system is doing well in state funding but the town side has a \$450,000 loss in revenue. The summary by function, numbers tell story and have

\$167,000 increase in salary/benefits offset by \$141,500 savings in special ed outplacement and saved \$39,000 in cost of operations. Concern last year cutting too many repairs and supply budgets and do we have enough money in new THS for repairs and damage; Mike Santogatta, probably not and transferred money to that line item and started with \$10,000 and then up to \$20,000 for emergency repairs; it operates more efficiently than 2 years ago; what Joe and crew and on site contractors have done to schools are remarkable, replaced windows in Fisher Elementary, painted, replaced lights in cafeteria and gyms with efficient lights; grants to pay for 40% of those costs; lower electric bills; reviewed specifics. (d) Reinforced what Dr. Distasio said using federal jobs money and using it all; however shrewdly using \$110,000 for displaced teaching and other money for contractors for outside specialists; however, his concern of working well and keeping on will result in revenue shortfall and other two teachers mentioned would be eliminated by attrition. Dr. Distasio stated they made difficult effort into coming in at zero and are looking under every rock to find savings. (e) encourage school staff to maximize time with specialists and do review, lesson planning and help with classroom management and whatever services can provide. Dr. Distasio stated we have phenomenal staff and very fortunate to have here. Peter Cook (a) questioned long term view and look at what doing here and in terms of per pupil expense and in Terryville higher than other community, \$11,556 per pupil and at 2006 was \$9800 per pupil and if remember correctly and go forward, zero budget over next 5 years at \$12,000 per pupil; per pupil expenses 17% and budget risen none and how control going forward. Dr. Distasio, look at state website which will give per pupil costs for all districts and what we are spending in Plymouth is lower than surrounding towns. (b) per pupil expense goes up faster as we lose population and you are up 17% and budget up 9 and how do we control that. Dr. Distasio stated he attended a meeting of superintendents last Friday and the Business Manager from Washington Depot who stated their per pupil is \$20,000 per kid and reason is, in kindergarten full time teacher with 6 students and same in first grade; do not know 2-3 years ago and can only take year by year. Chairman Zovich stated in projection if numbers hold and growth constant, if we lose another 80-90 students and actual enrollment at 1650 out of 1880, we get reimbursed a certain amount for kids going to magnet school. Dr. Distasio stated we get reimbursed for transportation about \$1300 but we expend more. Chairman Zovich questioned sharing services with neighboring communities on town side and Thomaston in real trouble, are there services we can share in education to reduce fixed cost base. Dr. Distasio, if not for the job stimulus money we would lose 2 teachers this year that would address population issue; because we have that we will keep class sizes small for next year; regarding efficiency with other districts, we are in conversation with Wolcott and Thomaston on special ed and sharing program and working with Health Trax who is looking at all 3 districts and will make suggestions to save money. Legislature has laws imposed that prevent things from happening such as a superintendent for Thomaston and Plymouth and see regionalization down the road.

4. Public Comment

a. Melanie Church, 328 Main Street, concern of looking at negotiation for teachers and costs and statement in paper that Dr. Distasio did not take raise for 3 years but he built it in and took furlough days and increased and this year they will be in contract and he will have gotten raises. Also, looked at longevity and in 1999 taken away from teachers and

since then it has been added to the superintendent's contract and for past year \$11,500 when teachers were getting \$200 and think this is astronomical amount. He pays into pension and then we reimburse him; we do not need another dependent child and have over 200 in the schools. Last year needed \$104,000 or they weren't going to make it and give back \$63,000 and we filled up our town oil because they had too much and say you cannot cut and will hear teachers are tough with their negotiations. Spoke to Pat and have not had time to copy last 3 years contract which is 10.1% and today in paper the state is over 9%. As he says he is in the middle of negotiations with teacher contracts and if they hear he is getting increase will they take decrease. We have to be fair and equitable with everyone and these are not fair especially when he pays in and we reimburse and those are things costing taxpayers fixed costs. Enrollment declining and even though it can decline this year we are staying at zero because of stimulus and nothing has ever gone down. Where it is business whether things go down and you have less and it costs you more. We need to look closer and look at how many students per non certified and teachers per student and break this stuff down. As community we need to look at every part. You hear layoffs and then hear two music teachers and one for each school and one told me there were 9 students in each kindergarten class and could that have been cut to save money. The statement to cut budget and ECS money taken away and went to Fedco on Saturday and Mr. Guerrerra who is part of consortium and he informed her that North Granby cut and appealed and won because they had less students. We cannot assume because someone says something that is the way it is. Wolcott laughs as they spend less per pupil and our Business Manager for BOE is Chairman for that Council and maybe he needs to bring some of those ideas here and this is outside the box. No one against education but against extra costs. Will buy book for each one of you and read it and demand answers from BOE because we have to stop spending because people's pay is going down and not up and paying more for insurance. UPS is paying more for their insurance and pay is going down and needs to hit every sector whether private, municipal or state. Chairman Zovich stated this is public comment and entitled for response and regarding comments on the superintendent that is BOE. The Mr. Guerrerra, who is he? Mrs. Church stated he came here one time before you were on Ralph and spoke about joining group. Chairman Zovich stated class size, this year because of federal jobs money they are leaving staffing levels the same because of no increase in general budget providing small class sizes and benefit to students. See decline in enrollment but looked like the high school enrollment is up and not expecting class sizes to be smaller. With regard to the City of Hartford tax base and they are immeasurably poorer than we are, reviewed their net grand list. Mr. Perugino, no comment. Dr. Distasio stated he cannot let it stay; had zero increase past year and year before. What Mrs. Church does not understand is furlough system and how works, explained. Rest of the things he is not getting into and his contract is discussed and voted on in open session and has been done that way for the last 10 years and not once has Mrs. Church showed up to ask questions. Mr. Perugino stated that contract is upstairs and at the BOE meeting and public comment is on the agenda. Chairman Zovich asked Mr. Perugino if, for the record, state when the superintendents' contract is reviewed. Mr. Perugino stated after the budget is approved by the town as they do yearly and done in public session. Chairman Zovich stated under state law, no town or municipality has the authority to question or increase or delete a BOE line item and we only have statutory

authority to fix total bottom line. This year not changing, how the BOE chooses to spend that money is up to them. BOE are legislative bodies and can spend and allocate money. We can ask questions, thankful we get answers and appreciate the level of transparency and there are some boards that do not give townspeople line item budgets and when we go to the public hearing on April 11th the entire BOE budget is line by line and all salaries, benefits, will be itemized and everyone is able to get a copy and urge to attend. Gerry Bourbonniere, Fairmount Avenue (a) speak on individuals who give character assassination. As Mr. Perugino said, the BOE has a contract with the superintendent as well as all teachers and upstairs but to stand here and assassinate in public forum this is not the time and place. I am a public employee and what to know what I made, \$44,000 and it is public record and you can go to City of Bristol; it is voted on by city council. What he gets is what city council gives; what Dr. Distasio gets is what amenities the BOE gives and if have someone has a problem with it then run for BOE. Chairman Zovich, for clarification Mr. Bourbonniere is a member of the BOE and has a right to vote on the superintendent's contract and represents the people of this town and we can focus on individual items with your budget but you as a member of the Board determine those line items. Not talking about personalities, out of order, performance of individual is out of order. (b) in all honesty, Ralph, someone like you needs to bring to a point of order and they can come to our meeting and speak under public comment. Have been on the Board for 4 years and have never seen anyone come for public comment. (c) unfunded mandates with the state. He, Mr. Perugino and Mr. Orsini went to CABA meeting with Dr. Distasio and gave 4 pages of mandates that they want to put through that are unfunded and one coming out of committee is carbon monoxide detectors; we have them in our schools in boiler room and the way the state wants to run it is to do every building, one per floor and a building with two or three annexes you are looking at multitude of detectors and the figure determined by the state per school district was \$7,000. Senator Welch was asked if the state legislature was going to give towns money to fund and he said they don't have the money.

c. Patty DeHuff, 20 Lynn Avenue, (a) student enrollment, page 17 of handout says for year 2010 but currently 1735 enrolled in schools and when you say enrolled you mean actually in buildings. Dr. Distasio, correct. (b) total population is 2002 student and can you break down the magnet, vocational tech and does this 2002 include any student who would be attending parochial school or home schooled. Dr. Distasio, no. (c) how do you come to the number to go to the state for reimbursement. Dr. Distasio, whoever is in school on October 1 is number used. (d) ECS money and what Plymouth gets, thought it was 1300 for transportation to magnet or vocational tech. Dr. Distasio, magnet schools. (e) do we get money from those who attend the voag. Mike Santogatta, no, children who go to voag we pay \$7992 each in tuition and absorb the cost of transportation and no state reimbursement. (f) using 1735 figure for ECS money. (g) I do believe this is the form for question raised by Melanie Church and the reason some people do not come to different boards is unwillingness of board presidents to treat public with respect and we have that indication here in tonight's meeting and perfectly appropriate for question to be raised that were raised and unfortunate such a hostile environment. My background is public and parochial school teacher and home school and sat on BOE and know that public deserves a lot more respect than they get in this town.

5. Board Member Comments

a. Pat Budnick, we are operating on in this budget is overall income decrease and other reimbursement from the State that have gone down and decline with loss of revenue of \$347,000 and overall increase on town side was \$123,000 and met .6 mill increase before we started this process. For most part income on items looked at we adjusted downwards and did try to cut other departments a few thousand here and there to prevent \$123,000 increase and probably will be an increase this year in mill rate but we appreciate the BOE 0% increase.

b. Ralph Zovich, thanked the Superintendent, Business Manager, Director of Pupil Services and building administration for the tight budget and do not recall how many years since zero increase and truly appreciate setting budget for zero increase.

6. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn by Vicky Care; second Pat Budnick and the vote unanimous.
Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Gudczauskas
Recording Secretary