

Town of Plymouth

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Board of Finance

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1. Call Meeting to Order – The Regular Meeting of the Plymouth Board of Finance was called to order on Thursday, March 21, 2013 at 7:00 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: Robin Gudeczauskas, Recording Secretary.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Review and Discuss Proposed General Fund Budget for FY 2013-2014

a. Board of Education presentation

Mr. Perugino stated they have a quorum present of the board of education. Chairman Zovich noted the Board of Education budget was approved by the Board and will be presented tonight by Mike Santogatta. Mr. Santogatta stated the 2013-2014 budget was adopted by the BOE last Wednesday and a collaboration of the Superintendent, himself and administrators as well as the BOE who met several times in reviewing it. Power point reviewed:

Budget Details reviewed noting accounts that will decrease/increase.

Student Enrollment reviewed from 2009 thru projected 2013

Budget Comparison –breaking out salaries by certified staff, non certified staff and administrative; benefits; instructional costs; operational costs; out of district costs; extracurricular; other system wide total of proposed \$23,252,791 for increase of \$123,116 or .53%

Budget Trends – back to the 2006-2007 year noting 2011-2012 was zero and 2012-2013 gave a .6% increase from allocation of ECS.

State Mandates reviewed noting those that are unfunded

Slide noting Proposed Budget Allows for the following with objective of budget for student learning

Staffing: Reductions based on enrollment decline as well as increase in other areas or redeployment of staff to critical areas for development of student achievement
Reduction of 6 full time equivalents

Additions – have many 3 & 4 year olds in district recognized special need of learning and need for typical peers for level we should be
Spanish 1 for 8th grade can be achieved before going to high school

Reading consultant at high school is through a Grant as students need to be brought up to level they should be at

Increase two Title 1 teachers for full time which are currently in district, member of PEA and have benefits

Staff Changes:

Recess monitors – HS Fisher and Plymouth Center School with goal to not use administrative staff to give teachers time to collaborate on goals and objectives during that time

Professional Development - \$5,000 to each school for sub help

Summary of this is addition of positions to include 2.4 classroom teachers, .4 paraprofessional, 1 reading consultant (grant funded), .6 Title 1 Teachers

Positions reassigned: 1 special Ed teacher from THS to FES; 1 math teacher from ETJ to Math Interventionist (THS & ETJ); 1 language arts teacher from ETJ to Reading Consultant

Challenges of putting together this budget reviewed
Overview of what .53% represents

Vicky Carey requested explanation on crisis teams in each building

Rob Parenti, Director of Special Education – represents subsection of teachers/administration, para's in each building to help a student who might be in a behavioral crisis, having a hard time. Mr. Parenti stated he is trained in de-escalation and how to build teams and will train for crisis to intervene quickly, de-escalate student to be calm and make assessment for next step.

Ralph Zovich asked (a) for background on how/why the State of CT is pushing scientific intervention; Mr. Parenti reviewed State of CT stating kids given IEP's without having a disability and were not getting instruction at level of need in regular education setting. State mandated SRBI law, reviewed. There is more than one layer of the SRBI and then go to special education referral which will try to filter out true disability or student did not have access to quality education when younger. From fiscal standpoint this is cheaper than having kids go under special Ed lingo. (b) if determine student needs remediation, do we have help available. Mr. Parenti stated we have bits of it and this budget addresses that in reading instructors, math instructors and need to target math as scores show and this budget will help to achieve some of those interventions. SRBI is a process and takes multiple years to be up and running.

Pat Budnick - is there a psychologist being added; Mr. Parenti stated the new Superintendent wanted this position, was added in and he supports it for risk assessment for crisis team. Will enable that we need third psychologist and with 2 social workers, will have them into classrooms to teach pro-social skills and to teach students how to handle situations in more appropriate manner.

Peter Cook (a) that is what is driving diagnostic services. Mr. Parenti stated the diagnostic is for board certified behavior analysis which is a contracted physician and

person who is licensed to come in and work with teachers and do assessment, write behavior plans and by law we need to have one in our district and would be in district a number of hours per week and another layer of support for our teachers. We are doing this to be proactive. (b) how many hours for \$50,000. Mr. Parenti, up to 30 hours per week for the school year. (c) drop in special ed or what is drop in students associated with that. Mr. Parenti, for out of district tuition noting bubble of students outplaced and at graduation age of 21 or actually graduating at 18 and seeing drop in number of outplaced students projected for start of next school year. Currently at 5-6 kids who will come off books at end of this school year.

Dan Murray – increasing staff by one for new psychologist yet it doesn't show on staffing additions; Mr. Santogatta stated that is his fault as he put various editions and did not include in power point.

Ralph Zovich, (a) reducing total of 6 full time and increase 4.4 so net staffing is going down or 1.6. Mr. Santogatta stated, yes, reviewing budget of certified staff adjustment and attrition for retirements and coming in at lower levels, had net increase of \$51,000 and started at \$322,000. (b) cost drivers in this next budget is uncontrollable in health care and absorbs \$320,000 of contractual increases and did have savings to offset a number of things but one benefits of whole SRBI program is to make early interventions, do not misdiagnose or identify kids and special ed costs should go down. Mr. Parenti stated yes.

Mike Drozdick stated (a) he sees a big salary increase and wonder if to do with increase in personnel or actual salary increase, questioned maintenance salary. Mr. Santogatta, stated they do have salary increase but did move Director into the maintenance account, added percentage of his salary, decreased overtime and gave contractual increase into where he belongs in that area. (b) office staff on page 18 up \$5,000; Mr. Santogatta stated there was a part time person whose salary was offset by a grant.

Dan Murray – fair amount of range in salaries current to proposed that lack continuity as what would normally be construed as contract and are there steps within that. Mr. Santogatta, yes, i.e. Plymouth Center is down and varies school to school depending on movement, attrition. (b) number of reductions and increase of 5.4; Mr. Santogatta, savings and will get that and email. He has now received a retirement notice from the elementary school and had budgeted money because reducing elementary and had to budget unemployment for layoff but now have movement in unemployment account; had budgeted for library for \$65,000 at high school and administration found someone extremely talented but at top step and came in at \$81,000 so it drives total salary figure. (c) Plymouth Center School is down \$53,500 and one increase in kindergarten salary and lunch room aides. Mr. Santogatta stated jump for kindergarten was full time kindergarten and someone transferred from 4th grade to kindergarten and budgeted at Masters plus 2 or 3 and then someone transferred in with a Masters 9 and had to increase salary and adjustment on other end. (d) total savings on energy and in each school can see in line item for fuel oil and gas; Mr. Santogatta noted they made switch to gas where possible and here nothing budgeted for oil and using all gas for savings of approximately \$9,000.

Vicky Carey, lunch room aides went from \$5,000 to \$14,000; Mr. Santogatta stated that is where they put recess monitors.

Dan Murray, (a) how are you saving \$7,000 in electricity; Mr. Santogatta, reduced usage. He noted other savings such as Harry Fisher with increase in kindergarten from going to full time kindergarten and the substitutes will be at principal discretion; has savings in oil and gas. Eli Terry – new consumer science, purchase substitutes, Spanish teacher.

Ralph Zovich noted science proficiency in high school and on CAPT is decline; Mr. Santogatta stated it is enrollment.

Peter Cook questioned how many in interscholastic sports; Ms. Suffridge stated about 120 students. (b) we pay about \$400 per child for that.

Ralph Zovich (a) zero dollars for equipment repairs on 4302 and is that in emergency repairs; Mr. Santogatta, yes, we have equipment repair and maintenance building and have done a lot of work at that building; (b) \$9,000 saving in fuel oil/gas heat. Ralph noted most drivers at middle are salary expenses.

Terryville High School – Ralph Zovich asked for biggest savings, health salary zeroed out; Mr. Santogatta stated had federal health grant and this is last year of it and have reapplied and will pay 100% of salary position.

Vicky Carey asked for explanation of SWAT tutor and summer; Rob Parenti stated that is our on line program for alternative ed program for kids who cannot be in high school anymore and have tutor who has to oversee and monitor on line learning. Brian Falcone stated program also for course recovery, reviewed. Ralph Zovich questioned how many enrolled in SWAT; Mr. Falcone stated SWAT and also program for course recovery and for home tutoring, SWAT is 15 and if did not have in place then your outplacement cost would go through the roof.

Vicky Carey asked (a) for explanation on NEASC; Brian Falcone, accreditation and we need to start budgeting for trips to update on training, they come for site visit and accreditation every 10 years. (b) Department Chair salary, is that negotiated and how many are there; Mr. Falcone stated contractual and one for all core areas, reviewed.

Ralph Zovich questioned (a) custodian increase and salary down; Mr. Santogatta stated change in personnel from newer people who start at lower level; (b) \$10,000 reduction in electricity. (c) cafe issues; Mr. Santogatta stated at high school good but continuous issues at other schools, dishwasher broke at Fisher and getting new one, freezer unit at Eli Terry was down.

School Facilities – already explained salary increase.

Student Services – Ralph Zovich noted outplacement declining; line 055600 and 055601 and put together still a reduction; VoAg savings is included in system wide services; Special Ed transportation and state does not reimburse for full amount and cap but how is it 75,000 savings; Mr. Santogatta noted a part of tri town agreement, reviewed.

Peter Cook, early retirement, what is \$70,000 savings; Mr. Santogatta stated that is severance 3-5 years ago from agreements if a teacher left they would receive so much for so many years including cafeteria workers who got 1500 a year for so many years, accrued vacation to pay out or contractual obligations from previous retirements and should go down another \$10,000-15,000 next year and should disappear in three years. Ralph Zovich, if we want to know numbers he would have to go back in time for number of people it included.

Mike Drozdick, Chapter 1 salary; Mr. Santogatta stated it is salary that we have a few teachers paid partially under grant and part by district and that number increases over time as amount of grant decreases or stays same and salaries go up.

Ralph Zovich, (a) certified and non-certified subs went down and stayed and purchase subs certified, differentiation; Mr. Santogatta stated certified are contracted for from colleges or interns and this year short on number of interns we would like, reviewed what interns do; purchased subs certified, 132,000 is sub account for Kelly Services who takes care of bulk of teacher absences; (b) are we seeing increase in absences; Mr.. Santogatta stated number is consistent on where it has been and varies and have number of pregnancies and out with extended serious illnesses and have accrued sick time, reviewed, volatile number at any given time, bill received daily and he tracks. (b) asked for explanation on stop loss limit and we do not have as much as liability; Mr. Santogatta stated individual stop loss of \$125,000 and aggregate for 500-550,000 and based on that and reserves we know next year should be fine, do have a 5 month reserve now.

System wide technology up \$25,000

System wide library up \$5,000

Central office up \$12,000 – Vicky Carey questioned telephone actual in 2012 is that minus and how did you do that because calculated all telephone through systems and spent over \$40,000 on phones alone in four schools not including central office and are you using cell phones. Mr. Santogatta stated they do have cell phones; Ralph Zovich stated costs are both cell and landlines; Mr. Santogatta stated E-rate grants are run through this accountant and can only spend on telephone communications or technology, website, etc. Cell phone is reduced from \$1,000 per month to \$500-\$600. He eliminated two lines into Plymouth Center School over last year and helped; continually looking at cost savings. Talking to Director of Finance as system is antiquated and costly and looking to integrate system which is here and we are wound into. Ralph Zovich noted there is some benefit to integrate town hall and school and pay one maintenance fee; Mr. Santogatta noted we are on town hall system which is Centrex and only one person left in CT that can maintain it. Ralph Zovich stated the Board will have Dave look into upgrade which will result in cost savings.

Board of Education – up \$12,000.

Dan Murray, what are we printing that never did before at 2,000; Mr. Santogatta will check with Superintendent as he is not sure.

Vicky Carey – (a) professional development days are principal and assistant principal and any ongoing teaching for them; Jodi Tenney stated that depends on needs of school and initiatives in school and have looked at tech integration in classroom; some are going to Ed Connection in April on informative assessments, grading practices. (b) consolidate busing with other towns and are there other programs or services we can integrate with towns. Mr. Santogatta stated ongoing and meeting in early April between himself, Rob and Jodi with Wolcott and Thomaston to go over summer school programs and looking at expensive services hard to get such as speech and language and physical/occupational therapy to share person between districts. (c) what safety features are in place in each school due to Newtown as she knows in PCS you get

buzzed in and what do you need to do to enhance. Mr. Santogatta gave update noting middle school has buzzer system and card system, reviewed that his pass that gets him into buildings 24/7 and teacher card will allow access during regular 7 am to 4 pm Monday thru Friday; a principal has access to any building and central office; teachers can only get in facility work in; have complete camera system at THS and Eli Terry, reviewed noting camera system that monitors hallways, outside areas, doorway with DVD recorders. We will be starting Monday installing at PCS a buzzer type system that if issue they can push button and police will automatically be dispatched for all schools. We have system wide safety committee, reviewed members who meet monthly and recommendations made. PCS has vestibule, had intruder which was in papers and on tv who had misidentified himself, overview given resulting in moving second set of doors farther inside into building, pen window from office to that area for objective of cutting down by 90% of people who request entry into building. Will have recording device and camera at front door; funding will come from existing budget. Fisher is next priority and emergency buzzer system will be installed followed by Eli Terry and high school. Ralph Zovich noted there is access to capital reserve fund and if need equipment purposes for upgrades that fund is available.

4. Public Comment

a. Melanie Church, 328 Main Street, (a) few questions and remember last year getting federal monies and got extra state money to this budget and more than what asked for from budget from the state and ended up given to BOE and each year give money back. Is there any way and with hard times that are going on not knowing where taxes will go on state or federal level to come back with zero based budget as there is a decrease in students; told some jobs were grants; central office a 12,000 increase and do not know if for extra part time person but think need to look for cost and amounts for people in this town as there has been drop in pay for private sector. Loud and clear on every news report that people are taking jobs for less money, they still have to pay taxes. If you look \$123,000 isn't that much to find cuts with as big as this budget is and asks that you try to find savings for public.

b. Pattie DeHuff, 20 Lynn Avenue – (a) come as former public school music teacher and come as former private school teacher and as a home schooling mom who graduated two daughters and has a teachers heart. Love learning and seeing children learn and not against education. But, Mr. Santogatta has stated, and no reason to doubt him and he is a straight shooter, and we have lost 229 students in past four years and average of 55 per year; depending on classroom, you are looking at 2-5 teachers that could be reduced and feel this trend will continue that there are more educational opportunities for children and do not need to be in public school classroom, and taxes in this state are killing people. We cannot continue to have taxes go up at rate going up and they have to begin coming down. With budget presented tonight we see mandates and this is perfect example of why the state should not be a part of education and what mandates do is stifle teachers and mandates are driving teachers to teach to tests. Mandates are not a good thing and grants are not a good thing as they are least efficient way to provide educational dollars to children, through circuit of federal government and state and children loses; our mentality is a grant is free money and lured in to do one thing and hire a specialist or

teacher for this or that and in beginning it pays substantial or all of salary and over time decrease and then taxpayer foots bill. Plymouth is a lower economic community and will get worse if we don't do something with taxes. Bottom line of BOE budget has to go down reflecting decrease in student enrollment. Suggested numerous questions you can say to go back and start asking questions you have not i.e. how many teachers retiring, how many will be replaced and how many are high salary vs. new teacher fresh out of college and asking BOE to ask the administration about medical insurance and maybe they have asked questions. How are they calculating insurance, or has the BOE looked at individual dollars of health insurance. Recommendation as taxpayer whose husband is on social security and disabled American vet you have to say no to the BOE budget, it has to be reduced.

c. Mark Berube, 48 Ronald Road, member of BOE, taxpayer in Terryville, teacher in Wolcott and 2 grandchildren in system. Would like to point out, and Mike did good job but reiterate the administration had unprecedented input into budget received tonight and each sat with superintendent for hours to hammer out exactly what was needed. They asked for what they needed not what they wanted and need to understand if you go to CT State Dept of Ed and click on student assessment you will find CMT and CAPT scores; reviewed what came up with in Plymouth. Scores are like this because we don't have supports in place and why we are putting in math intervention and reading specialist and school psychologist and why we can implement SRBI and only way is to put people and support in place. We have done a great job in last 2-3 years in bringing kids back and we put in place programs that meet their needs to bring back. Think about money we have saved over last 2.5 years on board and somewhere around 400,000 or more. Thinks back to last 2 years when giving back to town and 20/20 hindsight said we should use that money for something else and we gave back as we do understand who taxpayers are. He is taxpayer and cannot live with these scores as they are not good enough and we are not doing right by our students. Everyone understands steps and ways the BOE has saved; Marty as done great job but teachers and administrators who have turned off lights and walked in to a cold classroom. He was looking for 1.5 increase and what we need to get back to where we should be. This increase is nothing and people say 123,000 is a lot of money, it is, but nowhere what we need. If you don't pass this budget, watch the scores next year. People won't come to Plymouth, they will go to Wolcott and Thomaston. Past 2.5 years have learned need to be fiscally responsible but think of task of BOE which is to make sure every student succeeds. If we don't get that we are not doing our job and you are not doing your job.

d. Jerry Bourbonniere, 6 Fairmont Avenue, finance committee chair and to let everyone in room know, if they had boxing gloves he would have two black eyes; budget is compromise and the look at compromise should have come at .75. Do not want whole pie but wants slices and compromise the board came up with; can't get it all but can they get a little bit. Our test scores in town are not comparable to two area towns and if look at it and individual who wants to move to area, where are you going; not only that, the test scores will enhance outlook of community. We all need to understand in this state is he is a statistic because of age and reason why student enrollment going down so as young people realize no jobs in this state they will move where there are jobs and

affordability. Very expensive to live in CT and we are our own worst enemy; we elect government. To get rid of trend of older state we need to invest in our future. He has been on the board for 6 years and most input from administrators this year and nothing against previous administration but they were able to come to table and give insight to where needs are; they educate our kids. It will not happen overnight and everyone needs to understand new core standards. Need to prepare for the future now to obtain goals we need to get in 2-3 years. Understand 123,000 in this town is a lot of money but look at the future and what it will do. Legislature is looking at putting tax on oil and thank god we put gas fired equipment in schools. Look at both sides of coin and make judgment.

e. Dan Gentile, 269 Mt. Tobe Road, when look at budgets, take idea of what other towns are doing; some at 4 or 6% and for what Jerry said is right, we beat daylight out of budget.

5. Board Member Comments

a. Dan Murray – one question to ask and test scores only thing we have which goes hand in hand and we need to get back to where we were and agree; also don't think money is always the answer so can you tell where were we, where are we and forgetting about new tests coming down road and we can't or should teach to a test, if we have challenges if this SRBI is going to give us metrics early on to identify challenges to bring individuals to where they need to be it is phenomenal and if you can get to him where we were in relation to other towns over last 5 years and where today that will help him rationalize what we need to do to get to where we need to be.

b. Peter Cook – parents and kids in town are moving and seeing in declining enrollment and am torn because if you look, Mr. Berube wanted 1.5 and you are getting .5; your pupil cost is up 4% and hear Pattie and Melanie on cost per pupil and what getting by loss of kids; look at 200 kids lost over past years it is 2.8 million. You need to improve the school, looking at the weakest and trying to bring up but do not forget you are losing the smartest; you are spending so much time working on little ones and no opportunity for smart kids in your middle school and up; if you don't give them that and don't care how much time on bottom end, your test scores will go down. You will continue to look across the bar and educate all; you are not doing that. Losing to magnet and VoAg and at this point, go to parochial and we can outsource the entire thing. Don't forget your whole school. If we give you this money please use it wisely.

c. Pat Budnick – hand in hand with Peter and the fact is per pupil cost is going up and you did keep to .5 which is wise on your part. One of the things is test scores have been going down and what you have done is reallocated manpower to address. Overall you have shifted things around; bulk of increase is psychology and diagnostic and in short term it is increase and we will reap benefits in future. If there is an individual like fellow in Newtown hopefully he will be caught along the way instead of coming back against us. As any other budget we have to see what happens when we go through entire budget and what we feel the public will accept.

d. Mike Drozdick - did not have calculator and did long hand and cannot believe number of \$15,000 per person; agree with Dan and would like to compare scores over past 4-5 years with surrounding towns and how doing now and not good.

e. Ralph Zovich – mentioned to Mike and under current Charter is next step which will be the Board of Finance takes information from tonight and will do our due diligence and may have further dialogue and must have final budget proposal prepared for public hearing on or before April 23rd and propose set tentative hearing date for April 23rd. Next Board of Education meeting is second Wednesday in April. The Council will set a date for referendum on or before May 3rd. He thanked everyone for coming especially Mike Santogatta.

6. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn by Vicky Carey; second Mike Drozdick and the vote unanimous.
Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Gudeczauskas
Recording Secretary