

**BOARD OF FINANCE MEETING  
MARCH 19, 2015**

A special meeting of the board of finance was held on Thursday, March 19, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the conference room. The following members were in attendance: Chairman Peter V. O. Cook, Commissioners Vicky Carey, James Zalot, Dan Murray, Michael Drozdick and Commissioner Pattie DeHuff.

1. Call Meeting to Order.

Chairman Cook called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Cook led in the pledge of allegiance.

3. Fiscal Year 2015-2016 Budget.

Chairman Cook announced that this will be the presentation of the board of education budget. He introduced Marty Semmel the new superintendent. Superintendent Semmel gave a brief introduction of himself and stated that he was going to show the budget for the 2015-2016 fiscal year for the board of education with an increase of 4.4%. He stated this increase is because of fixed cost increases. He then went over the power point presentation of the budget. He turned half of the presentation over to business manager Santogatta to finish presentation. Chairman Cook asked if commissioners had any questions. Commissioner Carey noticed that there was no longer in school suspension and had an alternated discipline program. Mike Santogatta, Business Director stated that those monies are reallocated in other accounts. Commissioner DeHuff asked if the increased budget was a result of common core. Business Manager Santogatta stated no that is not why. He stated that is there a cost with common core but not sure quite how much. Commissioner DeHuff asked what the cost of the chrome books were. Business Manager Santogatta stated that they were \$300 a unit and they furnished them for middle school and high school. Commissioner DeHuff stated basically we are getting direction from the state. Superintendent Semmel stated the standards have always come from the state. Commissioner DeHuff stated that historically from the actual allocation the board of education was able to return money to the town and create a sinking fund. She stated if that is true then this is telling her that the budget is padded. Business Manager Santogatta stated he will not apologize to anyone for saving money. He noted thru negotiations and utility reduction, used text books, and controlled overtime they have returned money to the town which is the right thing to do. Commissioner DeHuff questioned the \$250,000 in the insurance deal. Business Manager Santogatta stated that we are a self-insured medical plan and explained how it worked. He noted that due to high deductible plans the town will be saving in the long run. Chairman Cook asked if the savings overtime in the medical plan could be presented in a graph. Business Manager Santogatta stated he does have it graphed out and will forward it to him. Chairman Cook asked about the

amount of students in the district. Business Manager Santogatta stated that they stayed pretty neutral. Chairman Cook asked if the board of education spends over their out placements budget by \$200,000.00 how would you pay for it, and is your option to come get a check. Business Manager Santogatta stated they would fund it with overages in other accounts because by law they would need to pay it. Chairman Cook stated that he wants to make sure the public understands. Chairman Cook asked if the headcount was the same. Business Manager Santogatta stated that the numbers will be down because of teacher and tutor reduction but added there are more specialized employees. Commissioner Drozdick questioned as to what was the location system wide fund include? Business Manager Santogatta stated that it includes legal fees, travel, social security , medicare, and unemployment compensation. He noted this was mandatory. Commissioner Carey asked if under early retirement they would hit the target amount of \$173,000.00. Business Manager Santogatta stated yes.

#### 4. Public Comment.

Melanie Church – 328 Main St. stated she had a couple of questions on the budget and asked about the number of students stating it was less than what we had. She stated we have 2 guidance in the high schools, 2 guidance in the middle schools and 2 vice principals. She asked if they could look at this and possibly cut one vice principal and share a vice principal between 2 schools. She stated this is two ways to cut the budget. She noted that a petition last year begged for a full time music with 200 parents that signed and stated we did not get the position. She noted we should cut from the top to give to the children.

Chris Simukinzer – 52 Old Farm Rd. thanked the administration for their budget. He noted that the history is not good on decisions that this board has made. He stated that some students still didn't have text books. He stated that the new superintendent is well over stated average. He noted we were repeating the same trend. He mentioned that he did not like the tone set at the budget public hearing and stated that the public was treated with a threatening tone. He noted that \$200,000.00 for chrome books for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade is not necessary.

Julia Kozikowski – 4 Park St., President of friends of music stated that they were to reinstate a middle school teacher. Increased at one school and decreased at another. She stated that Business Manager Santogatta budget had the assumption that someone would leave by seniority. She stated she has an elementary student and a high school student and noted it would break her heart if the budget is not approved. She stated her son has 28 kids in his elementary class and asked that they please support this budget.

Tracy Dupont – 139 Lake Plymouth Blvd. stated that she knows the board of finance has the hardest job putting this budget together. She noted that there is always cuts in the arts. She stated it was a fact that music increases student skills. She noted this is sad for the kids.

Jessica Dupont – 139 Lake Plymouth Blvd. stated that she is in the Terryville band drumline. She noted that the band was great at Eli Terry. She doesn't understand why 3 days a week they could not have band. She noted that they won first place in New Haven's St. Patrick's Day Parade. She stated bands will not be great if there are cuts and noted it is not fair. She asked that they bring back the

music teacher at Eli Terry. She stated that she noticed that a world language teacher was getting cut. Business manager Santogatta stated it was because of reduction in enrollment.

Brian Dunn – 19 Carriage Dr. stated that there is a problem with this budget and noted that there was a mishandling of funds. He stated they knew that they would not be saving \$250,000.00. He stated that in negotiations a 2.6% raise is a burden to the town. He questioned if there was any effort to ask teachers to cut their budget. He mentioned that he feels that the chrome books for the elementary is not a good idea. He said computers come later and they should save that money. He stated that the money offered to the new superintendent is a very large contract that does not fit this town. He mentioned that they still do fundraising and he finds that disturbing. He read statistics on reading levels and math levels. He stated that the money needs to be managed better. He noted that he did not like the final comment at the public hearing stating they are hiding behind the kids.

Bradley Kozikowski – 4 Park St. stated that he is a sophomore on the basketball team. He said cuts in the budget would ruin his experience of being a roo. He noted this is a once in a lifetime experience. He discussed the sports program and noted that if they cut money they will lose money. He stated he does not see any of this as waisting money. He noted it troubles him and stated people act like kindergarteners. He mentioned they should cut classes they are too large.

John Murphy – 385 Greystone stated that Business Manager Santogatta received \$250,000.00 for a shortfall in the medical reserve. He noted they should use this money to fund the arts. Chairman Cook noted that we are self insured and need to fund this.

Amy Ratke – 24 Hickory St. stated that she is encouraging the 4.4% increase for the district. She noted the town will not run well without a good education. She said we have 7 administrators keeping this system going. She noted one special education teacher could cost as much as \$100,000.00 to \$200,000.00 and we cannot change that. She stated the landscape has changed. She noted that this rhetoric of cuts is talked by the same people all the time. She mentioned she would encourage cutting sports before getting rid of a teacher.

Melanie Church – 328 Main St. stated that she would not be upset about the \$250,000.00 if it had followed the charter. The problem is it is not being followed. She stated the charter is law and it should have been voted on. She doesn't agree with cutting teachers but said instead cut administrators.

Brian Dunn – 139 Lake Plymouth Blvd. asked Business Manager Santogatta if the grant he is applying for towards transportation reflected in this budget. Chairman Cook stated that it is anticipated.

Jessica Dupont – 139 Lake Plymouth Blvd. stated that she agrees with Melanie Church about cutting a guidance counselor. She state she never knew who it was. She stated that chrome books being pushed to younger grades will not work. She stated the younger children will not be able to handle them.

Dan Gentile – 26 Knight Lane – Board of Education Commissioner – stated he would like to make a clarification that people don't seem to understand. He noted that fundraisers do not pay for books and supplies. He stated last year they froze the budget. He stated that Business Manger Santogatto runs the budget better than his home. He mentioned to say that the budget was padded is an insult. He noted that people come to hearings with one liners that are not the truth. He stated that the

previous superintendent put this committee in this situation. He said we need to move forward and be positive.

Raymond Engle – 6 Knight Lane – Chairman of the Board of Education – stated that he piggy backs Mr. Gentile comments. He noted there has been no mishandling of funds. He said to give this board credit. He noted that \$250,000.00 was an amount that was inherited and stated that was no secret. He stated he will fight for his budget. He noted that they lost 19 good people and stated that if they have to take a reduction he will have to cut more people.

5. Board Member Comments.

Commissioner Carey stated she had none. Commissioner DeHuff stated she had none. Commissioner Murray stated that he wanted to thank the young people that participated in public comment. He noted that it is nice to see the express themselves without fear. Commissioner Dziodick stated he had none. Commissioner Zalot stated he had none. Chairman Cook stated he appreciates the input. He stated this is a difficult year for the board of education.

6. Adjournment.

With no further business to come before said meeting a motion was made by Commissioner DeHuff seconded by Commissioner Zalot to:

“Adjourn”

The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mayra I. Sampson  
Acting Recording Secretary