

# Town of Plymouth

# Board of Finance

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- 1. Call Meeting to Order:** Ralph Zovich, Chairman called the scheduled March 16, 2017, Board of Finance Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Community Room at Plymouth Town Hall. Members in attendance: Victoria Carey-Vice Chairman, James Zalot, Jay Dorso, Pattie DeHuff and Jim Kilduff. Also present: Joe Kilduff, Tax Collector, Ann Marie Rheault, Director of Finance and Michele Yokubinas - Recording Secretary.
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance:** Ralph Zovich, Chairman led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- 3. Notice of Fire Exits:** Ralph Zovich, Chairman noted the fire exits.
- 4. Review Proposed FY2017-2018 Board of Education Budget - Revenues & Expenditures**

Ralph Zovich stated Melissa Johnson, Chair of Board of Education, would be a voting member at this evening's meeting.

Melissa Johnson stated that the Board of Education has worked tirelessly on this budget process, which also included two public budget workshops and that she appreciated the efforts of the Principals and their teams, Central Office and Advent team. Melissa Johnson stated the Board of Education was fiscally responsible while still meeting the needs of all students and briefly elaborated and encouraged the Board of Finance and all town residents to support the Board of Education's presented budget.

Dr. Martin Semmel noted that the Board of Education's budget process had been an overall a team effort and reviewed the following highlights:

- The Board of Education's successes and challenges in terms of their educational program and briefly elaborated.
- The Board of Education's Notable Budget Items, terms of infrastructure and instructional.
- Discussed and compared how school funding in Plymouth compares to similar towns and surrounding towns.
- Major budget drivers and bottom line

Dr. Martin Semmel discussed the following Recent Accomplishments:

- High levels of communication with parents and community.
- District and School Data Teams engaged in helping every teacher improve in their profession.
- Improvement in Smarter Balanced Assessments
- K-5 Reader's Workshop and Foundations Grades PK-2 fully implemented – Literacy Effort
- Plymouth Center School named a "School of Distinction"

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## **Board of Finance Meeting**

**March 16, 2017**

**Page 2 of 5**

Dr. Martin Semmel discussed Key Objectives for 2017-18:

- Provide a quality education at an affordable price
- Enhance student, staff and parent safety
- Increase Student Achievement
- Align curriculum Social Studies and Science
- Every single child deserves to get custom education
- Maintain 1:1 initiative and technology infrastructure

Dr. Martin Semmel discussed Challenges:

- Uncertainty around the impact of a new education funding formula
- Special Education Costs –Lack of predictability
- Healthcare inflation and long-term liabilities
- Unfunded mandates
- Diminished Federal/State support of education, including a surprise cut to current year grants
- Declining enrollment
- Aging infrastructure
- Percentage of Students –Free or Reduced Lunch

Dr. Martin Semmel explained the budgeting process:

- Zero based budgeting: start from \$0 and build a needs-only budget.
- Specifically highlight any ‘new’ spending.
- Aggressively seek opportunities for greater efficiency and cost savings.

Dr. Martin Semmel discussed Notable Budget Items:

- Police Department - Lost a police officer that resulted in the school losing the School Resource Officer –Board of Education sent out survey and overwhelming majority of parents want the School Resource Officer back.
- Work with town Energy Conservation Consultant and other infrastructure items.
- Instructional Item –World Language - Five- year language plan preferably (Spanish).
- Smart Start Pre K -Won \$150,000 Grant for first year so that Plymouth Center School can offer a for full day pre-k for families - \$75,000 portion paid by the State of Connecticut that covers salary for teacher and para for full time.
- Curriculum -AP English course, offered to juniors next year, which includes literature, writing, and reading.
- Unified Sports Program – Students with and without special needs come together to play sports such as soccer, basketball, bowling, and track.
- Behavior Analyst- Contract out to bring in house, spend less money, and get more hours by bringing in-house.
- Data shows -Fisher Elementary needs more support on math. Plan will be to move staff around and add another math coach.

## **Board of Finance Meeting**

**March 16, 2017**

**Page 3 of 5**

Dr. Martin Semmel discussed school funding, spending comparisons of other towns Primary Budget Drivers (Healthcare & Benefits, Non-Cert. Salary, SRO, Special Education Outplacement, Cert. Salary, Equipment and Furniture, Consultants, Fuel and Utility, Subs, and Transport) and historical increases.

Mr. Philip Penn briefly discussed enrollment reductions.

### Summary

- Healthcare, benefits and requirements in staff contracts drive more than 80% of the overall increase.
- Legally required to meet Special Education obligations.
- Federal and State funding environments continuing to deteriorate; recent cut to ECS an example.
- Budget emphasizes learning opportunities for students.
- Current need to start addressing long-term issues before they become significantly larger.

Dr. Martin Semmel stated that overall, budget request is \$24,455,080, difference is \$542,289 or 2.27% increase, stating this was a no frills budget and briefly elaborated. Dr. Martin Semmel requested the Board of Finance seriously consider including our entire request in this year's budget referendum.

## **5. Public Comments**

Cindy Candrea, 382 Harwinton Avenue, Plymouth, CT– She stated that she is for Pre-K but against being charged/billed for it. She further stated she fully supports the Student Resource Officer and that she was concerned about bullying.

Jackie Lundie, 48 Ridge Road, Terryville, CT –She stated that she wants her daughter to be set up for success and college for the future so she fully supports the five year Spanish Classes.

Sharon Funk, 12 Sandra Avenue, Terryville, CT stated she was in favor of SRO, noting it had a positive impact. She also stated she was in favor of Pre-K but not being charged for it.

Melanie Church, 328 Main Street, Terryville, CT –Questioned student decline, the Board of Education's surplus, the opportunity for students to attend community colleges, bullying within the school system, HAS participants and the number of students per grade.

Ellen Roth, 13 Holt Street, No. 39 Terryville, CT stated she supported the Board of Education's budget and briefly elaborated, noting the budget was pretty tight.

Chris Simo-Kinzer, 52 Old Farm Road, Terryville, CT stated he struggles with budget, noting this was a distressed community, lost on re-evaluation, noting the State was mandating a lot of items with affordable health care and briefly elaborated. Mr. Kinzer stated he felt strongly that all residents should support this budget.

Diana Ieronimo, 9 Meghan Blvd., Plymouth, CT, Terryville High School student stated she fully supports the Board of Education Budget in its content and briefly elaborated.

## **Board of Finance Meeting**

**March 16, 2017**

**Page 4 of 5**

Chris Perkins, 16 Orchard Street, Terryville, CT stated he supported the Board of Education budget and briefly elaborated, noting investing in Education pays dividends down the long road and was worth the investment.

### **6. Board Members' Comments**

Vicky Carey –Questioned the Health Insurance Amount of \$222,898 –What was being driven by that – Questioned if we do not include SRO officer in the budget would they consider a private security company. She questioned increase or decreases in staff and retirements this year.

Jay Dorso –Complimented the Board of Education's Presentation thought that it was very thorough. Questioned reduced lunch trend on graph and the Board of Education's view. Jay asked if they could go into more detail about the Visitor Management Software. Jay stated, "Sound interesting!"

James Zalot – Concerns about SRO Officer. Police Department go back on patrol, salary, benefits, retirement, he is subjective collective bargaining, for pay raises, more burden on town and briefly elaborated. We would have to replace SRO, someone to fill his void, time and a half overtime portion, which increases our budget the following year. Taken out of Police Department we have to watch our pennies. Questioned the five year Spanish – what do colleges require, would it be an elective and what other languages would be offered.

Pattie DeHuff –Complimented Dr. Semmel's work ethic and group/team effort mentality within the Plymouth Public Schools. Congratulated Plymouth Center School- School of Distinction and smarter balance test results. Noting if the Town was not in the condition she would be in favor of the budget presented by the Board of Education and briefly elaborated. Pattie DeHuff questioned if Pre-K cost could be pushed back to parent - some prior studies shown not beneficial.

Jim Kilduff- thanked Dr. Semmel for his presentation, noting it had been very thorough. He questioned for the public and for those that do not have children should they assume the budget would go up yearly. He questioned what constitutes Special Needs since it may be a large list.

Jim Kilduff stated that any advanced study helps the student and community weigh in excess of learning that language and that would be beneficial.

Ralph Zovich thanked Dr. Semmel, Members of the Board of Education, Mr. Philip Penn and department heads for putting budget together and clarified the Board of Finance would be having discussion with the Police regarding the SRO officer and Police Staffing. Ralph Zovich discussed Spanish/foreign language benefit, chrome books, questioned Technology Equipment Replacement schedule. Ralph Zovich highlighted Costs Expenditures by Area – while looking at individual line items. Ralph pointed out some cost savings one could be bringing Special Education Students back in-house if possible. Ralph Zovich briefly discussed enrollment declines and stated for the record he appreciated the Board of Education's faculty and staff -8.5% point increase in Math and 8.8% point increase in Reading, noting there were statistically significant changes in test scores.

**Final Board Member comments**

Vicky Carey – No Comment

Jay Dorso – No Comment

James Zalot – Half way through their budget little can be done, it is less than a mill a lot of money to the taxpayer. Increase will appear as a lot of money to taxpayer. Board of Education and Board of Finance hopefully will sharpen their pencils and get list less.

Pattie DeHuff – No Comment

Jim Kilduff- Stated it was very educational to hear comments from the individuals who have students in the school and the students themselves and were listening.

Ralph Zovich –Explained for the record the process that the Board of Education and the Board of Finance now have fulfilled their obligations and briefly elaborated. Ralph Zovich reiterated what Mr. Penn and the Superintendent mentioned, noting that 80% of the Board of Education’s budget is for salary and benefits for staffing. Ralph Zovich stated the Board of Finance was facing a State Budget Deficit with unknown changes to the ECS formula; the Teacher Pension, our allocation 1.2 Million he explained that we do not have the 1.2 Million teacher pension contribution if the general assembly decides to put that Teacher Pension contribution on us on top that’s an automatic 1.5Mill increase on top of whatever else were talking about and Revaluation /Assessment– Dependent on assessment range and cannot predict. Ralph Zovich stated the Board of Finance would do its best to make a decision before April 1 knowing the Board of Education might have to issue staff reductions.”

**7. Adjournment:**

There being no further business of the Board of Finance, a motion was made by Vicky Carey, seconded by James Zalot to adjourn at 8:45p.m. This motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

*Michele Yokubinas*

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Recording Secretary