

Town of Plymouth

80 Main Street, Terryville, CT 06786

www.plymouthct.us

Board of Finance

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1. Call Meeting to Order: Jim Kilduff, Chairman called the scheduled March 21, 2019 Board of Finance meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Assembly Room, Plymouth Town Hall. Members in attendance: Victoria Carey-Vice Chairman, James Zalot, Jay Dorso, Pattie DeHuff, and Briana Brumaghim-excused absence. Also present: Ann Marie Rheault - Director of Finance

2. Pledge of Allegiance: Jim Kilduff, Chairman led the group and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Notice of Fire Exits: Jim Kilduff, Chairman, noted the fire exits.

Jim Kilduff, Chairman greeted and welcomed members of the Board of Education, Town of Plymouth residents and introduced Martin J. Semmel, Superintendent of Plymouth Public Schools.

4. Board of Education Budget Presentation

Dr. Martin J. Semmel, Superintendent of Plymouth Public Schools presented the Board Of Education Budget PowerPoint Presentation which included some of the following highlights:

Recent Accomplishments:

- ❖ SBAC scores in math have increased from 36.6% (14-15) to 53.6% (17-18)
- ❖ SBAC scores in ELA have increased from 46.3% (14-15) to 52% (17-18)
- ❖ Meteoric Rise in Advanced Placement Participation: Compared years 2014-2015 (45 students) (9%) vs 2017-2018 (93 students) (23%) vs 2018-2019 (134 students) (32%)
- ❖ 4 Year Cohort Graduation Rate has increased from 87.1% (Class of 2014) to 92.3% (Class of 2018)

Where do THS Students Get Accepted? Classes of 2015-2018 (listed Colleges and Universities)

- ❖ SAT Math Scores have increased from 477 (2016) to 500 (2018)
- ❖ PSAT Scores Making Good Movement Year Over Year
- ❖ Increased safety around procedures and infrastructure
- ❖ Developing self-awareness and decision-making skills
- ❖ Data-Driven Decision Drives Teaching and Learning
- ❖ K-12 Curriculum Alignment
- ❖ Readers Workshop through grade 7

Shared Services

- ❖ Joint bidding process with Wolcott and Thomaston for regular and special education transportation
- ❖ Participation with consortium for oil purchase
- ❖ Participant in State 2.0 Insurance Plan
- ❖ Technology team serves both BOE and Town through shared service arrangement
- ❖ Both Town and BOE moving to the same financial software platform
- ❖ Food service director shared with Litchfield and Region 1
- ❖ Adult Education services provided through EdAdvance (RESC)

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Briana Brumaghim
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On-Going Efficiencies

- ✓ Significant Health Care Increase Avoided
- ✓ Number of Outplaced Students Reduced
- ✓ Reduced Buses from 15 to 14
- ✓ Hired Internal Staff to Avoid Costly Contracted Services
 - BCBA
 - Teacher for the Hearing Impaired
 - Food Service Director
- ✓ Applied for State Security Grant
- ✓ Replacing indoor and outdoor lighting with LED in cooperation with Eversource grants
- ✓ Facilities study approved and allow for multi-year plan on facility use

How Does Our Spending Compare? NCEP (Net Current Expenditure per Pupil) DRG F. Source: CSDE 2016-2017- Graph

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Comparison to the Median

Cumulative Historical Increase v. CPI

Challenges We Are Facing

- ❖ Well Below State Median Funding Per Student Means Fewer Opportunities and Support for our Students
- ❖ Volatility of State Funding (Education Cost Sharing and Excess Cost Reimbursement) – Governor Lamont has \$34,000 more for Plymouth in each of the next two budgets.
- ❖ Increasing Needs of our Student Population
- ❖ Special Education Costs are Difficult to Predict

Percentage of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch

2019-20 Budget Priorities

- ❖ Balance student needs and additional costs to the town.
- ❖ Provide additional safety measures for students and staff.
- ❖ Provide support for middle school and high school students who are reading below grade level.
- ❖ Manage large class sizes at ETJMS
- ❖ Increase student achievement and ensure that all students, including high-performing and struggling students, receive the appropriate support.
- ❖ Continue to develop classroom libraries and instructional material K-12.
- ❖ Sustain 1:1 student to device ratio in grades 6-12.

Notable New Equipment Items (>\$4K)

- | | |
|--|----------|
| • Teacher Laptop Replacements | \$21,875 |
| • R&W Workshop – 8th Grade | \$12,300 |
| • Wireless Access Controllers | \$ 9,500 |
| • Grade 2 Resources for additional classroom | \$ 5,000 |

Notable Staffing Changes Note: * Cost includes salary and benefits

- | | |
|--|------------|
| • ETJMS Music 1.0 → 1.5 | \$32,058 |
| • French .6 → .4 at THS | (\$20,541) |
| • Dean of Students – FES (Title I) | \$80,000* |
| • District Wide 6-12 Literacy Specialist | \$90,000* |
| • Teacher of Hearing Impaired | \$83,206 |

- Additional Grade 3 Teacher \$53,122
- Special Education Tutor at FES \$19,828

Projected Class Sizes Fisher Elementary School – Chart/Graph

Projected Class Sizes Plymouth Center School

Expenditures by Area comparisons included: 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020

Primary Budget Drivers

Historical Increases

Overall Budget Change:

2018-2019 Budget \$24,037,791

2019-2020 Request \$24,616,665

Difference: \$ 578,874

% Increase: 2.408%

Summary

- Given the significant funding gap that exists, the Plymouth Public Schools have managed to make gains in the areas of academics, social-emotional learning, and opportunities offered to our students.
- The Plymouth Public Schools are in the bottom 10% of all districts as it relates to per pupil spending.
- Without additional support, the education system will likely begin to lose ground.
- The Plymouth Public Schools have been a great partner with the Town of Plymouth to improve its financial health.

The above Board of Education Budget Presentation from March 21, 2019, can be viewed in its entirety at <https://www.plymouth.k12.ct.us/common/pages/DisplayFile.aspx?itemId=19460154>.

Dr. Martin J. Semmel stated looking at other surrounding towns we are very reasonable and rational with our percentages.

Mrs. Melissa Johnson, Chairman Board of Education stated we need to invest in the future and that is investing in the students and their education which includes the teachers, administration, and staff that supports and teaches them.

Mrs. Melissa Johnson stated our administrators, teachers and staff are here this evening because they want to serve the students and family. The administrators, teachers, and staff are here to advocate for the student's education and want to provide as many learning opportunities as possible in a healthy and safe environment and briefly elaborated.

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Pattie DeHuff questioned after looking at audit, re. Student enrollment why if enrollment went down why is staffing up.

Dr. Martin Semmel stated did not look at that report – dependent on types of positions and structure, fewer full-time paraprofessionals and more part-time paraprofessionals reduce overall cost but increases number (head count) - those part-time positions do not receive benefits, will look at audit/report-will follow-up and briefly elaborated.

Jim Kilduff questioned the Dean position.

Dr. Martin Semmel stated due to increased insurance costs, salary, and benefits which is 80% of budget. The Dean piece – a number of students that need to be checked in on often, we need a staff member at Fisher Elementary School where the need is presently. Need a highly qualified position that can keep up with issues, etc., need someone to focus on that. Principals provide instructional development of the teaching staff, teaching is getting more complex and the goal is to catch kids up when they come in behind and briefly elaborated.

Jim Kilduff questioned if the budget continues to get reduced - where you indicated some items are not being done and/or may starting seeing drops in scores can you elaborate?

Dr. Martin Semmel stated the needs are far more than what was requested. Staff members are doing the best they can but they can only do so much and briefly elaborated.

Jim Kilduff stated considering the State Standards and spending - the school has done a great job and we can see the achievements and scores, very good job!

Jim Kilduff questioned the Health Savings Account \$200,000 - co-pays for the teachers.

Dr. Martin Semmel stated we subtracted that part of the deductible we were funding as a (Board of Education).

Dr. Martin Semmel stated proud of all the work the staff is doing.

Jay Dorso questioned how many students are utilizing the teacher for the hearing impaired.

Paul Hendrickson, Business Manager stated (7) students.

Dr. Martin Semmel stated we avoided future cost by keeping some students here and avoid them leaving the system.

Pattie DeHuff questioned how much is in the Sinking Fund.

Paul Hendrickson, Business Manager stated \$169,000.

Dr. Martin Semmel stated we are building our Capital Improvement Plan and working with the Capital Improvement Commission (planning for potential future cost) and briefly elaborated.

Jim Kilduff, Chairman stated the Board of Finance meeting schedule is posted on the Town of Plymouth's website.

5. Public Comment

Jennie Fowler, 268 Town Hill Road, Terryville, CT - in support of the Education budget, grew up in Terryville and is raising her children here, loves Terryville, and supports students and schools.

Martin Sandshaw, 7 Richmond Drive, Plymouth, CT - asking Board of Finance to be careful when looking at the Board of Education budget, remember your decision affects the children and their future.

Kelly Accetura, 490 North Street, Plymouth, CT - concerned school staffing - Plymouth Center School - need to provide a safe social and learning environment, please add additional funding - vote in favor of hiring an additional teacher.

Rachel Marlak, 20 Tomlinson, Terryville, CT - concerns for children in second grade, dynamic of children within a class, raised class size to 27, and social behavior became toxic - need second teacher.

Bernadette Persico, 62 Fall Mountain Lake Road, Terryville, CT - Plymouth Center School - need two teachers, chaos travels with her child, weekly, learning stops, education stops and school is no longer fun. We need to make our town competitive re: quality Education system - to encourage town growth.

Emily Seeds, 45 Allentown Road, Terryville, CT - presently sophomore at Terryville High School, member of chorus - positively affected by music which provides creativity and motivation, appreciates Timothy Keane, Music Director - in support of full-time Music Teacher (accept proposed budget), had opportunity to participate at Berkshire League Music Festival - this was essential in the development/growth of students, and beneficial to students involved.

Arianna Lance, 4 Bobin Road Terryville, CT - presently a sophomore at Terryville High School, part of the music program in support of full Board of Education's budget which includes a full-time Music Teacher at Terryville High School, if not included will have a detrimental effect on students.

Jackie Lundie, 48 Ridge Road, Terryville, CT - in full support of Education Budget, need an additional teacher for second and third grade, need to prepare children now to go forward. We have spent money on technologies, infrastructure, we have a quality school system and we don't want to lose that otherwise you'll lose people moving into this town. Advocate for the 1.0 → 1.5 Music Teacher at Eli Terry Junior Middle School.

Timothy Keane, Music Director, Terryville High School - stated cut at middle school - existing now with one full-time music teacher, has done a tremendous job, hope you support this budget and noted the importance for the High School students.

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Ann Marie Rheault, 80 Main Street, Terryville, CT stated have three boys in the school system (one graduated- band president, member of Berkshire Festival) spoke on behalf of Mr. Keane, her sons all play the saxophone, participants of music program which has offered more opportunities/travel, etc. that they would not have had if not for the Music Program. Eric Dolecki (Nephew) –Middle School Music Teacher who graduated from Terryville High School and was voted Teacher of the Year in Easton, CT due to the large part of being a student of Mr. Keene.

Gerry Bourbonniere, 6 Fairmount Avenue, Terryville, CT – “Pay me now or pay me later” everyone understands that – re: original budget - I advocated for third grade teacher, Music Teacher (High School) and part-time Music Teacher at Middle School, voted “no” for a specific reason, knowing that if we don’t get money then we’ll disappoint parents. We look to get money so that we can afford those programs and we need to make those decisions to support every student. We need more than that. Very upset that they cut 3 (three) Literacy Teachers which had a direct impact on scores. Passionate about Education - Board of Finance and Town Council needs to understand that we have been using Band-Aids in the school system. The Board Of Education is frugal so please give us the money to support our needs.

6. Correspondence

None

7. Board Member’s Comments

Pattie DeHuff - As a former Music Teacher I know very well how beneficial Music is to a child’s life. Whatever we end up doing with the Budget, we need to consider the entire town. After the process - Board of Finance’s (proposed amount) and the Town Council (determines final amount) Public Hearing April 22, 2019 - it is not our decision as to how the Board of Education utilizes their money - challenged the Board of Education re. (Union contract negotiations, teacher raises) –do not adopt automatic raises since that does not happen in the private sector. re. Bottom 10% pupil spending- as a former home schooling Mom keeping in mind -not always a direct correlation with how much money is spent with how well a child is educated, want push back from Board of Education, Superintendent, and parents, re. Common Core - need to go back to the basics, multiplication tables, addition, etc. Thanked the Board of Education and Dr. Martin J. Semmel for his presentation.

James Zalot - None

Vicky Carey - None

Jay Dorso – None

Jim Kilduff stated doing a great job with minimal financing because of the situation in the town and the Mill Rate - towns of our size are funded mostly by real estate, our grand list has gone up which is great, support proposed/reasonable projects in town that will increase the grand list - need to think long-term and fund schools properly. Other town projects - road score report-scores up/need to maintain, the town is required by DEEP – Need to construct Salt Shed/timeframe/price, and briefly elaborated.

Our next meeting will be March 25, 2019

8. Adjournment

There being no further business of the Board of Finance, a motion was made by Vicky Carey, seconded by Pattie DeHuff Carey to adjourn at 8:51 p.m. This motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Yokubinas

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Recording Secretary