

*City Council Committee
Education - Budget
Tuesday, April 19, 2016*

Chairman Warren Levy called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. on Tuesday, April 19, 2016, in the Caucus Room, 3rd Floor, Danbury City Hall, 155 Deer Hill Avenue. Present were Committee Members Irving Fox, Joseph Scozzafava, Gregg Seabury, Fred Visconti; and Ex-Officio Members President Joe Cavo, Phil Curran, and Paul Rotello. Also present were David St. Hilaire, Director of Finance Joe Martino, Schools Director of Finance and Board of Education Chair Eileen Alberts.

Mr. Levy noted this is a continuation of a previous meeting of March 29th wherein the Board of Education and Administration presented the Board of Education 2016-2017 budget of \$129,467,777. Mr. Levy then give brief over view of the previous meeting.

Mr. Levy asked Mr. St. Hilaire how the City came about there budget recommendations. Mr. St. Hilaire said they work with the school administrators with the understanding that their budget must balance with the overall City budget. The City will continue to work with the school as they always have.

Mr. Martino commented that currently there is an \$800,000 to \$1M increase to the Board from the State Educational Cost Sharing but there are issues on sales tax revenue to the City. Mr. St. Hilaire noted that the State took \$2M away from the City municipal revenue sharing. All agreed that at this point State funding to the City is unknown until the State has a budget.

Mr. Martino discussed the moving of Head Start program funding out of the alliance grant in response to Mr. Levy's questions. Mr. Levy commented on increasing enrollment in our public schools and the limited resources to subsidize a Federal program. Ms. Alberts and Mr. St. Hilaire commented on Head Start funding as well.

Mr. St. Hilaire noted we are trying to save money every day, close the gaps, and find other sources of money. Mr. Levy noted 57% of all revenue currently received goes to the schools and the cooperative spirit between the City and the schools was to be commended.

A motion was made by Councilman Seabury seconded by Councilman Visconti, to recommend that the City Council adopt the Mayor's proposed Education budget for the year 2016/2017 of \$125,986,000 for the Board of Education; \$208,575 for Health and Welfare; \$214,000 for HeadStart.

Under discussion of the motion Mr. Fox inquired regarding strategies and types of things may or may not be on the table with these numbers. Mr. Martino stated the self-insured number is more solid and the 5.5% will come down somewhat. They will continue to look at retirement, it may move up resulting in some savings. New staff issues will continue to be

reviewed. The 8th grade was noted. There are a lot of fixed costs, but if ECS comes through, it will alleviate additional strain. No additional savings are anticipated in utilities/fuel costs. They will try to defend class size and continue to look at the Alliance. Every year the budget gets tougher. Special Ed growth will be a concern; however, if the State comes through regarding excess costs, the City should get some additional money. The Board is commissioning a study regarding deeper enrollment growth and their Board will be receiving a presentation in a few months. *The motion was tried passed unanimously.*

A motion was made by Councilman Seabury to adjourn. So ordered the meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Warren Levy, Chairman

Irving Fox

Joe Scozzafava

Gregg Seabury

Fred Visconti

~AD HOC REPORT~
School Budget
Tuesday, March 29, 2016

Chairman Warren Levy called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 29, 2015, in the Caucus Room, 3rd Floor, Danbury City Hall, 155 Deer Hill Avenue. Present were Committee members Irving Fox, Joe Scozzafava, Gregg Seabury, and Fred Visconti; and Ex-Officio Member John Priola. Also present were representatives as follows: Dr. Sal Pascarella, Superintendent of Schools; Joe Martino, Schools Director of Finance; Kim Thompson, Schools Director of Human Resources and Legal Counsel; Board of Education Chair Eileen Alberts and Members Michael Ferguson, Ralph Pietrafesa, Fred Karrat, and Richard Jannelli; and Kelly Truchsess, Secondary Special Education Supervisor.

Mr. Levy began the meeting by discussed the purpose of the meeting stating it is taking place now before the Mayor presents his budget to the Council to avoid a School Spring Break scheduling conflict. There will be a final meeting after the Mayor presents his budget to discuss and make recommendations to the City Council.

The appropriation request is \$129,467,777. This is a 4.59% increase for FY 2016/17. The increase is due, in part, to a 1.5% enrollment growth, contractual agreements, and ongoing funding issues with the State of Connecticut. The largest increase is in salaries and benefits totaling \$5,265,255 representing 26 new hires.

Mr. Pascarella commented on increasing enrollment, class size increase, the high school referendum and addition of 18 classrooms, etc. He commented on an equity and access lawsuit. The middle school, early retirement, 8th grade global academy, administrative services, common core, legal and contractual obligations with regard to salaries, and new graduation requirements were all discussed.

Mr. Martino discussed measures for cost containment in health insurance, worker's comp, energy efficiency, and transportation. There is pursuit of grants including technology and security grants; the ECS Alliance grant changes to flat funding this year, and there will be a possible reduction in the magnet school grant. State budget reduction issues were reviewed. Key budget issues are enrollment growth at 1-2% every year, detailed in various charts, new 8th grade, and special education student needs. Free and reduced lunches and English language learners, were also noted.

Budget items were reported as follows:

Total Salaries and Benefits: \$74M an increase of \$3.6M or 5.1%. Step increases were highlighted (top Step is 1.5% increase). Base salary increase of \$2.8M. \$460,000 increase 6.4 Teachers, 1 Assistant Principal. Projected \$700,000 retirement savings (20 teachers x \$35,000).

Program Improvements: 3 Elementary School Teachers; 5 Middle School Teachers (remediation), 1 Special Education Supervisor; at the High School 1 Counselor, 1 ESL, 1 Science Teacher, 1 Nurse, and Special Education Speech and Language Support. Part Time Substitute salary increase of \$24,000. Administrative per pupil cost reductions were noted. Self insurance was discussed with a \$5.7M reserve fund; there is a 6.2% increase overall but the base is 5.5% which is a good amount for renewal. Reductions in ER visits and increases in generics were noted. Worker's Comp was commented on as well.

Service and Fees: \$5M is a \$221,000 increase or 4.6% percent with a large percentage being 242 Special Education Tutors and occupational therapy support.

Utility and Repair: \$1M is a \$15,000 increase with the lease of Early Childhood Center, 3% trash hauling increase, and utilities savings in solar and upgrades.

Transportation/Tuition/500 Accounts: \$12M is a \$346,000 increase or 2.9% with STA contract noted; Special Education Transportation contractual increase reported; and Tuition \$57,000 increase noted.

E-Rate Funding: reduction with the Universal Service Fund Charge restructure.

Lottery System: 11 Students \$7,000 per student.

Supplies: \$4.7M is a \$141,000 decrease with comments on fuel and heating cost reductions, natural gas, LED and solar projects, and weighted supply funds were also discussed.

700 Accounts: Flat, no increase in Honeywell Accounts, copier contract, and solar lease.

Dues and Fees: decrease of \$25,000 with the blind program no longer needed.

Technology: No increase and additional funding secured with E-Rate.

Total Budget: 4.59% increase in Budget.

The Committee responded to Mr. Levy and discussed enrollment increase spread throughout the schools and the redistricting that took place. Mr. Scozzafava discussed the timing of the meeting and general budget trends within other contracts. Mr. Martino commented on growth. Mr. Pascarella commented on salary savings. Ms. Thompson discussed health cost savings and plans in further detail.

Mr. Levy mentioned economic recovery in the State and the types of jobs that are returning and the importance of balancing good education with monies coming in and sustainability. Ms. Thompson commented on mandates driving up costs. Mr. Pascarella highlighted three focus items: full reimbursement for Danbury High School, excess cost funds, and ECS. The focus is on cost avoidance.

Mr. Jannelli commented on contractual increases and work that needs to be done to secure other funding sources. He made suggestions regarding the Committee lobbying for short- and long-term funding sources. Mr. Visconti expressed disagreement with the elimination of the HeadStart Program funding.

Mr. Martino responded to questions regarding administrative building increases and related staffing. Mr. Fox expressed concern with future staffing at the High School. Mr. Levy inquired regarding distance (blended) learning. Cost sharing was also discussed.

A motion was made by Councilman Visconti seconded by Councilman Fox, to continue the meeting for further information. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Warren Levy, Chairman

Irving Fox

Joe Scozzafava

Gregg Seabury

Fred Visconti