

**SPECIAL MEETING
WETHERSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
FRIDAY APRIL 30, 2010**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a special meeting on Friday, April 30, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. in the Town Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, CT.

Present: Councilors Drake, Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, Montinieri, Roberts, Deputy Mayor Console and Mayor Hemmann. Absent: Councilor McAlister.

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant Town Manager, Dr. Thomas McDowell, Acting Superintendent of Schools, Ron Army, Interim Business Manager, Michael Emmett, as well as Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk. Board of Education members attending: Board Chair Raul Rodriguez, Vice-Chair Maria Tougas, Mrs. Hodges, Mr. Cascio, Mrs. Maluccio, Ms. Montinieri, Ms. Stanziale, Mr. Stanziale. Absent: Mrs. DeAngelo.

REVISED BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET

Chairperson Hemmann called the meeting to order and asked Jeff Bridges to present any information he wanted to share with the Councilors.

Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, stated that the staff at the Board of Education has revised its' proposed 2010/2011 Budget request. The current request is \$49,020,623 which is \$482,440 less than the original request and \$81,916 more than their current year budget. He has a revised mill levy calculation sheet with the new Board of Education numbers in it. The result is a decrease in the proposed mill levy from the current year's 30.68 to a proposed 30.66. Addendum #1

There is a memo from Mr. Ron Army, the Interim Business Manager. He and Ms. Jan Newell, Supervisor of Financial Services, contacted Lisa Hancock, Director of Finance for the Town, regarding new numbers for health insurance. Using the \$150,000 of reserve and an increase of 6.1% they calculated a savings of \$332,271 in the Health Insurance line. Mr. Army also included a memo regarding the heat expense calculation for the 2010/2011 Budget. Addendum # 2

Jeff Bridges stated that the proposed mill levy does not take into account any changes or modifications made or discussed on the Town side so the proposed mill levy is only a reflection of the impact from changes on the Board of Education side.

Dr. McDowell, Acting Superintendent of Schools, stated that they deducted \$97,411 from Social Security; \$36,758 from benefits saved from the Retirement account; \$206,250 for Legal Services and \$93,750 from the Supervision account. This takes into account the \$300,000 the figure added back by the Board of Education on March 11, 2010, less \$20,000. The Board of Education also added \$234,000 to Pupil Tuition because of the uncertainty of excess costs and questions on the

number of CREC slots. They also added \$38,000 to the Certified account and left \$12,000 in Health to cover the need at Silas Deane Middle School. The result of these deductions and movements is an overall decrease of \$482,440. He said that Jan Newell prepared three sheets showing last year's budget and expenditures, the current year's budget and projections, and a proposed budget for 2010-2011. Addendum #3

Councilor Manousos asked about the changes in the memo.

Mr. Army stated that there is savings in the Health Insurance line.

Councilor Drake thought there was a big reserve.

Deputy Mayor Console said it was the difference in renewal.

Dr. McDowell said that it was overstated. He could not connect some of the numbers and thought it was overstated by approximately \$97,000. The State had been picking up the costs of the Hartford magnet schools; he was not sure how many slots the Town would need for CREC so he added \$234,000 back to the budget. They are only accepted in Grade 9 and the Town is responsible for grades 10, 11 and 12. CREC has 22 slots with 7 slots upcoming.

Councilor Hurley asked what is missing in this budget that you would really want?

Dr. McDowell stated that all of the kindergarten and first grade classes are too large at 24 students. He would like to see an additional teacher in each of the elementary schools so that the classes could be no larger than 17 students.

Councilor Hurley asked about the nine teachers who received the notices of non-renewal.

Dr. McDowell stated that they are all added back into the school budget for next year.

Councilor Hurley asked if this year's projected expenditure is 486 or 487.

Dr. McDowell stated that it is correct and added that there are unforeseen expenses.

Councilor Hurley inquired as to the increase in state grant amounts.

Dr. McDowell responded that the American Recovery of Reinvestment Act of 2009 ("ARRA") funds will not be available next year, therefore the Dean of Students position at the Wethersfield High School cannot be filled next year. He noted that he will distribute a report which reflects that since the inception of that position, there has been one-third less detentions and suspensions.

Also, the position for the Administrator of Special Assignments in Central Office will be eliminated also as there is no funds. This individual reported to Dr. Negroni and Mr. Kolhagen's

office, gathering information from the high school guidance department. He noted that the difference in state aid is \$134,180.

Councilor Kotkin stated the legal services for this current year is \$114,000 and council overestimated by \$68,000. He asked if the investigator (Reid & Reige) was paid out of the legal account.

Dr. McDowell noted that the investigator's bill was paid out of the legal account. He also noted that approximately \$82,000 has been paid to date but this does not include anything from the Ethics proceedings, except for our own Board attorney. The \$82,000 includes the \$68,800.

Councilor Kotkin noted the Town Council is paying the counsel fees for the Ethics Boards and asked if any legal fees for the individuals brought before the Ethics Committee has been paid.

Dr. McDowell replied that those fees have not been paid.

Councilor Kotkin asked if the Town is to pay for the legal fees, where will the money come from to pay these fees.

Dr. McDowell replied that the money would need to be found somewhere. He stated that money has not been built into the budget to pay these fees.

Councilor Kotkin asked if the money that is to be paid to Mr. Kohlhagen under the agreement will be paid entirely in 2009-2010.

Dr. McDowell responded that it will be paid in the current fiscal year and stated that he didn't want anything carried over to next year. There is a signed agreement by the parties but it will not be made public for 21 days.

Councilor Drake inquired as to where the \$1,000,000 went.

Jeff Bridges noted that there are still health insurance increases.

Dr. McDowell referred to page two in which the numbers in parentheses are the negative numbers and are the expenses people decided that needed to be spent. There was further discussion on the different expenses.

Councilor Kotkin inquired about the supervision account for 2009-2011 and asked what those vacant positions are.

Dr. McDowell reported: Director of Human Resources, Director of Business, two positions for Instructional Supervisor and Network Administrator for a total cost of \$484,774. He explained

that presently, the Director for Human Resources and Director of Business are being filled by interim employees and the other three positions remain open.

Councilor Kotkin asked Dr. McDowell if these positions would be filled by July 1.

Dr. McDowell responded that he didn't think those positions could be filled by July 1. He stated that he wasn't going to start the interview process until the budget has been approved.

Councilor Kotkin inquired as to how natural gas is prepaid.

Dr. McDowell responded that if money is left over at the end of the school year, the remaining money is applied to the account. Therefore, the following school year begins with the new budgeted amount.

Councilor Roberts asked if the Director positions for Human Resources and Business are going to be combined.

Councilor Hurley responded that there has been discussions regarding combining the two positions and the committee will meet again on May 11.

Deputy Mayor Console thanked Dr. McDowell and his staff for all his work.

Councilor Manousos and Councilor Kotkin concurred with Deputy Mayor Console despite the public criticism.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:00 p.m., Deputy Mayor Console moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Manousos. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk
Approved by vote of Council
June 7, 2010