



Town of Colchester, Connecticut

127 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, Connecticut 06415

**Board of Finance
Budget Workshop Minutes
Board of Education Budget
April 8, 2019 @ 7PM
Town Hall, Room 1**

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TOWN OF COLCHESTER

Members Present: R. Tarlov, N. Negron, R. Esteve and M. Egan

Members Absent: A. Bisbikos and A. Migliaccio

Others Present: A. Shilosky (arrived 7:50), BOE: M. Bylone, B. Bernier, R. Besaw and M. Tomasi, Superintendent J. Burt, Director of Teaching & Learning C. Hewes, Director of Special Education K. Perry, CFO M. Cosgrove, BOS: R. Coyle, many citizens and Clerk, J. Campbell

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**-Meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairman R. Tarlov.
- 2. CITIZENS COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS**-None
- 3. DISCUSSION – Board of Education Budget**-The greeter position is new and is a pilot study. JJIS has a reduction in office staff and therefore the pilot will start there. BOE is looking to expand this program into all 4 buildings. Vendors have been researched. One has been chosen and will be providing a background search and print visitor pass. This will include visitor date, time and destination. This position allows for an added layer of protection. 18-21 Program was being handled outside the district at 5 locations. The current budget projects a start with the cost of 3 students moving into that age opening. Any participants are on the PPT process. It is possible that we could bring in tuition students from other towns once the program is up and running efficiently. C. Maher has established relationships with 9 local businesses for this program. Paraprofessionals are a line item that fluctuates frequently with the moving in and out of students. Currently there are over 90 paras in the district. BOE feels there can be an overall reduction of 2 paras throughout the district as well as a move to the 18-21 program. This number can change before the start of the school year. There is a 1.0 reduction in a speech pathologist in the pre-k program currently there are 3, reducing down to 2. A 1.0 reduction at the middle school is a reading interventionist, which is part of the reduction plan already in place and is in-line with the math support structure, 1 coach and 1 interventionist. A .8 reduction at the high school is .4 PE health, which is currently vacant, and .4 social studies which is a reduction due to the enrollment and analysis of the high school. 1.8 reduction in special programs is a combination of things. There is an afterschool resiliency program, the responsibility will be shifted to Old Bacon. The special education and social worker assigned to this are working after school and being paid in addition to their salary. The shift will remove the extra hours and .4 social studies has been removed from the district. Alt Ed at Old Bacon currently has 3.0 which is 3 teachers. A review of the program reviewed a FT Social Studies is not needed, rather 4 PT teachers in the 4 core areas. Page 10 of the budget book

shows the "other supplies" listed on page 2 of the budget. 1 to 1 chrome book program was researched through other districts, with a Dell "coach" and a digital conversion team put into place. 50 years ago an educator in the front of the room along with a text was your greatest point of access to content. Now we have high quality curated databases with enriched content to be our access point. The promise the digital conversion team made was that the curriculum was going to drive the decision making. As each curriculum was reviewed by the teacher team to explore new technology, it was realized to outfit classrooms/carts for every room in Bacon would soon exceed the population of students, so 1 on 1 became more cost effective. This provides better access to higher quality material. The ramp up in funds this year for the program is because the curriculum has not been visited for a couple of years as we have had leadership changes. 2 committees have been in place to work on curriculum on a board level. There were 2 major increases, Employee Related Insurance and Retirement Payout, to the Employee Benefits which had a total increase of \$561,108. There have been 14 staff retirements. The greeter position is a salary of \$17,000 plus benefits, with a 10 month, 40 hours a week schedule. Each greeter station is approx. \$8,000 to set up. This includes: desk, chair, laptop, wiring, lockdown button, video system and buzzer system. The technology long-range plan has increased by \$175,036 for real purchases for real items that will be installed in August of this year. The capital reserve request will offset future purchases. Each time a new curriculum comes on board there are initial costs that come with that. Currently there is a \$130,000 increase within curriculum implementation. The goal is to level the cost over the years. With budget concerns there is a potential that the full instruments for the curriculum will not be added and will be spread throughout the course of a year or two. When looking at the 4 schools, WJMS has the largest increase. The main driving factor was the increase in electricity and contracts. The building is new so there wasn't any data to budget for. Now that the numbers are similar to another building of its size the numbers have been budgeted off of that. Teacher leader stipends are used to try to unify the district to move the instructional initiatives forward. BOE wants the educators, who know the material the best, to speak for the district rather than administrators. With the declining enrollment, the cost has not gone down because the District has created a budget for sustainability. There are increasing mandates from the State of Connecticut. The board has and will continue to make cuts as needed moving forward. Currently Norwich students should be at 30, but we are only at 20. Our current language in the contract we are allowed to take up to 10. BOE is working to change that to 15 and to also add a lottery to fill positions of those that move or drop out of the Bacon program. NFA is a large school which doesn't always appeal to students, so a positive for those students is that Bacon is smaller and more family style. We do have certain programs that are unique to the area. Currently the tuition amount is not competitive, BOE is looking into that. This tuition program could potentially be used with other towns and Superintendent Burt is looking into that. Norwich is not the only district that doesn't have a high school. There are a lot of reasons for someone to come into the school district, and we do need to remain attractive while we do offer this program.

4. **CITIZEN COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS**-D. Bouchard asked 18-21-year-old program is only going to affect those that are currently seniors, those already outplaced won't be asked to come back? Will a child be forced to come back to Colchester? J. Burt This will be based on a PPT process. There may be a student that would benefit from coming back into Colchester's Program but this is based on what the PPT team feels is best for the child. D. Bouchard asked what the worth of a Greeter over a Para? B.

Bernier stated that we need to make sure that our schools are safe for our students. This is a cost-effective measure to do that. J. Burt also replied that the para #s fluctuate often. We rely on the expertise of the staff to make sure we have the appropriate staffing for all students. We have to make sure we are doing a full analysis of the issues to find a remedy that best fits the issue. M. Egan asked what the .4 reduction was in the capstone program. J. Burt replied that the .4 is in social studies and not capstone. BOE is working to make capstone a requirement and to increase capstone. M. Kehogreen stated that data would help with backing the greeter position. She is experiencing a class that could use an additional person in the classroom. J. Burt the greeter is not necessarily for the number of people but for the added layer of protection. R. Tarlov wanted to know why they chose JJIS. J. Burt said that the decision was made because the reduction in office staff was there. J. Bussiere asked what was happening with the resiliency program. J. Burt stated that it is still in existence and will be moved to alt ed. M. Hayes pointed out that the person assigned to the greeter position is not trained with security issues. J. Burt mentioned that the intent is to create another layer of protection. We are not having armed security guards at each door. R. Tarlov pointed out that M. Hayes was asking the investment is \$17,000 and is asking if security level worth the investment. R. Tarlov also asked what the judgment will be as far as the program being successful. J. Burt said if there is less disruption to the office and if it prevents people that shouldn't be in school from entering. N. Negron stated that this is the first line of defense. R. Coyle commented that the experience at her granddaughter's school is a kiosk. You scan your own driver's license and your badge gets printed there.

5. **DISCUSSION – Board of Education Budget**-R. Tarlov stated that without Andrea and Andreas present, he would like to bring the next steps in front of them as well. The agreement was to have BOE come back on the April 17th meeting with questions being forward to the BOE beforehand so that they may be able to have the answers for the meeting. M. Egan wanted to remind the BOS and BOE that there are many changes coming from the State and teacher retirement may be one of the items brought to the Town level. He would ask boards to plan ahead and communicate well to the public. B. Bernier stated that he went to the state to testify and shared the testimony with the BOF. See attached.
6. **CITIZENS COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS**-D. Bouchard stated that she feels it will be hard to get a \$1 million increase.
7. **ADJOURNMENT**-R. Esteve motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:18 PM, seconded by N. Negron. All members present voted in favor. Motion carried. 4/0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanie Campbell

Attachments:

BOE Slide Review

2019/2020 Proposed Budget 2018/2019 Adopted Budget Comparison

B. Bernier testimony