



**BOARD OF FINANCE AND
BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
Wednesday, April 28, 2021, 6:00 P.M.
City Hall Auditorium – Zoom**

Minutes

In Attendance: Mayor Elinor Carbone, Lauren Pesce, Christopher Beyus, Christopher Anderson, James Wright, Mark Bushka (Zoom), Mr. Boynton (Zoom) Jonathan Draper, Carol Anderson, Fiona Cappabianca, Sue Lubomski, Ed Arum, Armand Maniccia, John Kissko, Gary Eucalitto, Jessica Richardson, Nikki Fappiano, Sue DePretis, Ellen Hoehne, Cathy Todor, Ed Corey (Zoom)

1. Mayor Carbone called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.
2. Review and discussion regarding the proposed operating budget for Torrington Public Schools for the fiscal period from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022.

Ms. Lubomski shared a PowerPoint presentation. Her presentation began with the vision statement: The Torrington Public School will ensure every student is able to graduate with the skills and attributes that empower them to enter that college or career of their schooling. The goal of the budget process is to meet student needs and education requirements while maintain fiscal responsibility.

General Budget: Elementary: Provides a Behavioral Program at Torrington, Maintains Behavioral Supports, Maintains Intervention Support, Maintains WINN Block, K-5: targeted enrichment or support time.

General Budget Secondary: Provides enough courses to meeting new graduation requirements, 25 credits, offers new course options to meet graduation requirements, provides targeted acceleration and academic support: 6-12, expands in-house alternative regular and Special Education programming.

General Budget Districtwide: No staff or course section reductions, continued intervention supports, curriculum revision, K-12, Upgrades in infrastructure and cyber security, time & attendance management system, professional learning and evaluation management system, and staffing & budgeting system.

General Budget Staff Additions:

THS – English Teacher, Science Teacher, Social Studies Teacher, Family Consumer Science, Special Education Teacher

TMS – Special Education Teacher

Additional Staff Supports:

1 El Coordinator, K-12

6 El Teachers, k-12, one for each school

3 bilingual tutors, grades 9-12

These minutes were approved by the Torrington Board of Education on May 26, 2021.

6 bilingual paras, one for each school
.4 Torrington bilingual Teacher

1 human resource generalist
2 social workers, one at TMS and one at THS

Ms. Lubomski reviewed all the grants the school system receives. She also named various accomplishments our school district has achieved. Some of the accomplishments are graduation rate increased, special education reduction, internships and apprenticeships offered to THS students, award winning home visiting program, 1:1 student devices, and the referendum for the new high school, middle school and central office. Ms. Lubomski reviewed the special education costs and tuition numbers and how this impacts the budget. They continue to be unpredictable and fluid based on out-placed cost per pupil, in-district cost per pupil, and individual services required. The current Torrington Public School enrollment was shared. She presented the reductions, non-staffing reductions, and the insurance reductions.

Budget increase presented is 1.26% at \$77,502,179.00.

Mayor Carbone complimented Ms. Lubomski and said that this was a great presentation, including the great news about Special Education. Ms. Pesce asked if there are any required classes for next year. The focus is on offering more electives in all content areas to allow students to reach the 25 credits. Ms. Pesce asked if more students will be on buses next year. Ms. Lubomski stated that as parents become more comfortable with the transition back to all in-person, they will begin to use district transportation more. Ms. Pesce asked about this year's attendance. Ms. Lubomski answered that it has been tough, especially at the secondary, but in October our attendance was 80-85%, especially at the elementary level when they returned to in-person learning. Mr. Beyus asked if the board expects any families to choose homeschooling next year because of religious exemptions for vaccines will no longer be allowed. The board answered that families are grandfathered in if they had submitted a previous religious exemption. Ms. Lubomski answered that previously our vaccination rate was very high at 97%, but there may be some concerns at this time. Mr. Beyus asked about the number of new staff hires impacting the general budget. Mr. Arum clarified 25 new staff. Will there be any backfill of retirements that are included in this budget? Mr. Arum said there are 5 included in this budget. Mr. Anderson asked if the grants are reflected in the book and how confident is the board that the grants are coming. Ms. Lubomski and Mr. Arum answered that it won't include every single grant. They are confident that all federal and state grants, because the funding has been confirmed. They discussed the possibility of the grants coming back in the future. They discussed the limits on some of the new grant moneys, such as the funding related to COVID-19 and unfinished learning. Mr. Wright asked for clarification on why the Foods teacher was going

from .4 to .6. Ms. Lubomski replied that this teacher would also be able to offer Child Development classes as well as Foods. Mr. Wright asked if social workers are in regular teachers' contract. Mr. Maniccia explained the salary is higher than a teacher's salary, because they have completed a Master's Degree. Mr. Boynton stated that we have to be diligent moving forward looking for other funding opportunities to keep this budget as reasonable as possible. Mayor Carbone asked about the approach for hiring for addressing the learning gap. Ms. Lubomski replied that the Office of Teaching and Learning were working with the sites to determine the student needs. In addition, the district is waiting for guidance about the American Rescue Act Grant. The CARES ACT II funding will address those gaps and overtime, as the needs are met, the positions will be addressed accordingly. The focus is on accelerating and enhancing instruction. Mr. Eucalitto stated that the school system is the social services agency for the students, which has an impact on our budget. Teachers do not have to just teach anymore, they must be mentors, social workers, and help bring the child into school. We must invest in those kids like those English Language learners (EL). If we get them the appropriate resources, it will pay off in the future. Mr. Eucalitto went on to say that many cities have classes, resources, and services for EL students and families and in Torrington, it falls on the education district. Ms. Pesce empathized. She used to make the same point when she was a Board of Education member. It is a real challenge that society needs to figure out. Mayor Carbone stated that those social service offices are federally funded, and the City has recognize this as a problem too. The City's funding has been cut significantly. Ms. Pesce asked how much of the staff has been vaccinated. Ms. Lubomski stated about 70%. Do you anticipate teachers being in the classroom next year? Ms. Lubomski answered yes.

3. Review and discussion regarding the proposed Capital Budget for Torrington Public Schools for the fiscal period from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022.

Mr. Arum presented a 5 Year Capital Plan. The THS Turf Field will remain untouched. The \$100,000 is the money we are allotting every year to replace it after 10 years. Mr. Beyus asked how the grants will impact any of the one-time expenses, such as technology, cleanliness, security. Mr. Arum stated that as of now we have to wait for guidance on the American Rescue Act. Mr. Boynton asked when looking out on the 10 year Capital Plan, do you have any roof issues on the horizon? Mr. Arum did not have the answer now, since he is still gathering that information. Mr. Arum said the 10-year Capital Plan should be available next year. There will be a preventative maintenance component to it. Mayor Carbone stated that after the 10-year Capital Plan is completed, the Board of Finance and Board of Education will need to sit down with our Public Works Director. Mr. Arum gave a general update of what is going on the THS, TMS and Central Office building project.

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4. Adjournment. Mr. Anderson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Mr. Beyus. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:31 P.M.

5. Public Hearing:

(Paraphrased) Veronica Gelormino (Teacher at TMS) sent in a comment - "I Support the Torrington Board of Education's budget. This year has been challenging due to this pandemic. The gaps in learning and social emotional learning may take years to overcome. Funding will be needed to meet these needs. The Board of Education has met often to craft this budget carefully to meet these needs."

No one else spoke.

Public hearing closed.