

WESTBROOK BOARD OF EDUCATION
WEDNESDAY, February 16, 2011
Special Board of Education Meeting 7:00 p.m.
WESTBROOK HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Alaimo called the special meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Westbrook high school library.

Members Present: Matthew Alaimo, Maureen Westbrook, Myrn Keryc Lee Bridgewater, Sally Greaves, Pat Labbadia, Joseph Campbell, Dee Adorno @ 7:40 p.m.

Absent: Marti White

Also Present: Superintendent Patricia Charles; Business Manager Lesley Wysocki, Administrators Robert Hale, Katharine Bishop, Lisa Wilson, Kathleen Onofrio; Teachers, Parents, members of the community

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. BUDGET WORKSHOP

- A. Board of Education Budget for 2011-2012: The Board of Education conducted a general discussion giving the public an opportunity to voice opinions and ask questions about the proposed budget. Dr. Charles presented the budget in a PowerPoint presentation starting with the five goals of the Board of Education and the guidelines approved by the Board. Changes to the earlier proposed budget reflected current information that health insurance costs would increase from 10% to 14.5%. Dr. Charles reported that there continues to be an effort to reduce that percentage. Dr. Charles commented that this budget reflects cuts already taken and she explained that every effort has been made to communicate with vendors and contractors to get the lowest possible rates for services such as transportation including special education transportation, grounds maintenance, supplies and equipment, etc. Dr. Charles explained that although enrollment is down, the mandates to comply with high school graduation requirements calls for an increase in personnel. Dr. Charles highlighted several aspects of the budget and provided a list of achievements the school district has accomplished. Mr. Alaimo expressed appreciation to Dr. Charles for her work on the budget and each of the board members were asked to comment: Mr. Alaimo stated that given the climate he feels the budget increase is too high but cuts made should not impact students. Mr. Campbell stated the budget increase in his opinion is too high given the governor's current address. Mr. Labbadia commended Dr. Charles on proposing a responsible budget addressing the goals of the BOE and commented that the public needs to understand what is driving any increase. Mrs. Adorno declined comment as she was not present for previous BOE discussion. Mrs. Greaves agreed with Mr. Labbadia in that it is important that the Board educate the community regarding the needs of the school district. Mrs. Keryc stated it is a respectable budget, but the Board needs to be realistic. Mrs. Westbrook brought up using the health reserve and to do whatever is needed that won't affect programs. Mrs. Bridgewater expressed her opinion that it is a respectable budget and she is concerned about the Governor's budget.

There was some conversation about the health reserves and the formula used.

The public was given the opportunity to speak:

Mr. Tony Cozza – commented not to cut teachers – students should not be affected. What are the risks of using insurance reserves?

Sylvia Guinan – Role of BOE is to provide a budget as to what it takes to provide a good education for our students – present what it is – do not do anything that affects classroom size.

Mr. Richard White – Questioned Anthem’s increase of 14.5% and how that much of an increase is justified.

Mrs. Jackie Lyman – Suggested the BOE maintain class sizes.

Mrs. Carolanne Powers – Commented on the benefits of the extended day kindergarten program.

Mr. Richard White questioned what a .2 teacher is and Dr. Charles responded that it means a teacher is needed for an extra period.

Mr. Cozza commented that the town indicates it will come in with a zero percent and the BOE will be judged against that.

Mrs. Kathy Rutty asked if the Board had looked for savings with vendors and Dr. Charles responded bids had gone out on several and savings had been acquired in those areas.

Mr. Hale commented that the Special Education Department is accountable for many other things including 504 plans, medical needs, SRBI, etc.

Mrs. Bishop stated that she received a phone call from Head Start in Clinton that we should expect five families to register in March. Services from the Special Education Department will be needed for these children.

Mrs. Westbrook commented that we have been “cost effective” in providing for special needs. Mrs. Westbrook questioned how the BOE should communicate the budget to the public. It was suggested that in the presentation to the Board of Finance, that the \$41,000 “discretionary” money begin the presentation.

Mr. Hale commented that there is a group of citizens in Clinton who have formed a website – Mobilize.Clinton.org to communicate various concerns.

Mr. Richard White suggested “Save our Education for our Children” would be appropriate.

Mr. Alaimo expressed his appreciation to the public for their feedback

The Board continued their discussion on the budget. Dr. Charles provided a list of additional cuts that could be made to decrease the percentage if the Board so chooses. A decision was made to repair the railings on the bleachers in this year’s budget, as it is a safety issue. Other items discussed included: late bus, field trips, second kindergarten bus, carpet replacement, wrestling mat, pole vaults, etc. Dr. Charles will re-order the priority list for the next meeting. Discussion will continue on the use of the health reserve.

Mr. Alaimo requested staffing figures over the last 5-6 years as it relates to enrollment.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Town Charter as it Pertains to the Board of Education: Tabled until a future Board of Education meeting.

V. PERSONNEL

- A. Employee Request for Leave of Absence

Moved by Mr. Campbell and seconded by Mrs. Greaves to move into Executive Session at 9:10 p.m. with invited guest, Jim Crawford. **Vote unanimous.**

Discussion of matters that would result in the disclosure of exempt matters.

Moved by Mrs. Westbrook and seconded by Mr. Labbadia to move back into Regular Session. **Vote unanimous.**

Motion: To authorize Dr. Charles to develop an MOU with James Crawford to provide intermittent leave with pay to perform legislative duties for the remainder of the current school year. Such leave is provided with the understanding that he would reimburse the cost of necessary substitute coverage and switch to the state medical plan with savings of approximately \$6657 to the district. Such MOU shall not be executed until approved by legal counsel. Moved by Mrs. Westbrook and seconded by Mr. Labbadia. 6 (ayes) 2 (nay's)

- VI. ADJOURN: Moved by Mrs. Adorno and seconded by Mrs. Bridgewater to adjourn at 10:22 p.m. **Vote unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted,

Myrn Keryc, Board Secretary

Cecilia S. Lester, Board Recording Clerk